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MEMOIRS

OF

HYPPOLITE CLAIRON;

THE CELEBRATED FRENCH ACTRESS:

WITH

REFLECTIONS

UPON

THE DRAMATIC ART:

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH;

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THE memoirs of celebrated artists, as well as those of eminent poets and illustrious philosophers, are equally interesting to those who admire their genius, as to those who design to tread their footsteps. One feels curiosity to learn by what incidents they were guided in their choice of profession, and by what studies and means they reached that high degree of perfection which procures for them the suffrages of their own age, and the remembrance of posterity. Their reflections on the art or the sciences which they profess are precepts which their followers collect,

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and by which they are frequently enabled to shorten the thorny path which leads to celebrity.

The work of Hyppolite Clairon combines in itself all those advantages. This celebrated actress is yet alive; she resides at Paris; and it is at nearly her eightieth year that she appears to have recovered, for the purpose of writing her memoirs, that strength of colouring, and justness of expression, which distinguished her style when in the bloom of youth.

Hyppolite Clairon was born in obscurity. Her early education was, therefore, neglected, and at ten years old she scarcely could read. Her ta-

lent for the stage, however, was already manifest. From her windows she was accustomed to see mademoiselle Dangeville receive her lessons in dancing, and she learned to imitate. The applauses which were lavished on these, her first attempts at imitations, heated her youthful imagination; and for the future she dreamt of nothing but of securing the praise she had gained. Shortly afterwards she was brought to the theatre, where the entertainments of the evening were *Le Compte D'Essex* and *Les Folies Amoureuses*. Next day she was able to repeat above a hundred lines of the tragedy, and two-thirds of the after-piece; she could even imitate the tones and gestures of the performers. Her mo-

ther designed her for a working business; but the sprightly daughter could not endure the labour of the hands. One day, when the mother was inflicting on her the punishment of her idleness, she cried out, "Well, you had better kill me at once; for if not, nothing shall prevent me from being a player!"

It soon became necessary to determine; and Hyppolite appeared at the Italian theatre before she was quite twelve years old. Some time afterwards she was engaged in the Rouen company; she was applauded by the audience, and astonished her employers. It was here she acquired the habits of the theatre. After having appeared

successively at different theatres, she at last presented herself at the *Comedie Francais*. She insisted on playing first-rate characters, and to make her first appearance in that of *Phédre*.—The managers laughed at her presumption; but she was resolved, and succeeded. After having performed for twenty years at this theatre, with great success, she went into Germany, and took up her residence in the neighbourhood of the Margrave of Anspach, who appeared to entertain for her, if not love, at least a very lively friendship. But to use her own expression,—" there is no court so little as not to have its Narcissus:" she was persecuted here, and returned to her country.

Hyppolite Clairon terminates this recital by a critique on the theatre, in its present state, which appears to carry severity to a degree that borders on injustice. It is interesting, nevertheless, to relate the judgment of a performer so celebrated; for, notwithstanding the spirit of prejudice by which it appears to have been dictated, it yet seems to inculcate truths which it is for the interest of the art should be kept in mind, as well by the public as by the performers.

Though mademoiselle Clairon has her memory impressed with the productions of the best French poets, she yet resorts to the theatre, to feel that

additional interest which the beauties of action never fail to add to the beauties of composition. " But, alas!" says she, " what do I meet in these representations but the vulgarity of the lowest classes of life ;

——" No principle of art—
No idea of the dignity of the character ;

" every one plays after his own fashion, and forgets that the performer should accommodate himself to those with whom he plays ; that it is his duty to exert some effort, to make some sacrifice to the *ensemble* of the piece, and to secure *effect*. I observe no unity of tones, no dignity of action. I have seen heroes throw themselves flat on their belly, and sometimes walk on their

knees. I have seen indecency of dress carried so far, that the actress appeared under the single covering of a flesh-coloured taffety, and exactly fitted to the skin from head to foot. I have been stunned with ranting, and disgusted with buffoonery; and, to complete all, the pit has cried out *Bravo!*

"It is not for me to decide, whether the public and the performers of the present day are wrong, or whether the public and the performers of my day are right; but I may be permitted to say, that there is not the least trait of resemblance between the two."

It is a proverb, 'that old people boast

of the past, at the expense of the present; perhaps madame Clairon, spite of the strength of mind which she possesses, has yielded to this weakness. It is certain, that the French tragic stage has always wanted that effect, resulting from the coincidence of efforts in the performers, with the want of which she reproaches the present stage; but had she seen her *élève* Rancourt play Agrippine or Cleopatre, Clitemnestre or Medea; if she had seen the affecting Degarcius shed tears in Zaire; if she had been present when Talma, not merely *represented*, but *became* Nero or Charles IX. Egistheus or Macbeth, it were impossible that she could have said the French performers displayed

no principle of the art, no idea of the dignity of character. It may be granted, indeed, that in France, as well as elsewhere, the tragic scene is occupied by persons, the great majority of whom are of moderate talents; and that the men of ability, occupied in political pursuits, are not enough attentive to the arts; but is it to be believed, that in former days the theatrical performers of France were perfect? The critics of those times assure us that they were not. At all times, and every where, mediocrity is the character of the multitude; and great talents are among the most rare productions of nature.

A candid man will be equally distant

from a blind respect for what is ancient, and from an unjust prejudice against what is modern. Nothing, no doubt, is more useful to the arts than an imitation of great models; but there must always be reserved to genius the privilege of quitting the point at which others have stopped, and advancing still nearer to the goal. Madame Clairon herself has given an example of this; she tells us that she herself was the inventor of a new style of playing; and that, after having tried it at Bourdeaux with success, she came to Paris, determined to introduce and establish it there, or to quit the stage. She succeeded: she dared to play Rodogune in a manner different from mademoiselle Gaussin. That charm-

ing actress, so celebrated by Voltaire, gave to this part a grace and simplicity which were quite inconsistent with the character of the princess. Madame Clairon had the courage to represent the character in its natural colours, and to open a new path. She accomplished her purpose. Nevertheless, after the play, she overheard the celebrated Duclos say, in a high and authoritative tone, "that she ought not to play tender characters after madame Gaussin." "Surprised," says madame Clairon, "at a decision so crude, fearing the impression which it might make on those who heard him, and overcome by a feeling of anger, I immediately approached him, and said, 'What! Rodogune a tender character, Mon-

sieur!—a Parthian, a fury, who demands from her lovers the heads of their mother and queen—this a tender character! A pretty judgment, truly!' Terrified myself at what I had done, tears overcame me, and I fled, amidst unbounded plaudits."

Madame Clairon proves, by these anecdotes, that it is sometimes right to reject received opinions, if one would improve on an art.

The Memoirs of this celebrated actress are filled with interesting anecdotes, in which sometimes characters very celebrated in the reign of Lewis XV. make their appearance; particularly marshal Richlieu, who does not play here a very honourable part. We

here see her, indignant at the excommunication of the players, employ all her influence to have this ridiculous anathema removed; and that, if she failed in the enterprise, it was only by the folly of a courtier, who, before his master, became almost an ideot, and trembled like an infant.

Is it possible to avoid laughter, when we are told, that by one of those singularities which seem to be presages, she was baptised on one of the days of the carnival, by a curate disguised as an harlequin? But one reads with more surprise the following story: A young man, who was passionately fond of her, but could not procure a return of his passion, died, threatening to haunt her during the

remainder of her life; and, in fact, she is frequently purſued by plaintive cries, which every body hears; by flashes like those of a musket-shot, which, however, are harmless, but which every by-stander can see; by noises like the clapping of hands; and, in fine, by aërial muſic. A great number of persons have been witnesses of these singular phænomena; but the cause or author of them has never been discovered.

One would be tempted to believe that madame Clairon had been deceived by an illusion in her advanced age, but that the recital of these strange facts is contained in a letter written by her

long before she arrived at an age when we are apt to be thus imposed on. Besides, she cites facts and persons, and appears to be in no degree superstitious. Were these appearances then produced by some tricks of natural philosophy, performed by the friends of the deceased, to torment her? Of this we are left in doubt.

In this collection we perceive the same pen which traced these anecdotes with so much lightness and grace express strongly the most profound sentiments. We here find madame Clairon giving to a female friend counsels which every young woman should have continually before her eyes. We find also a letter written with a great degree of

eloquence to the Margrave of Anspach, to dissuade him from abdicating his power; and she has interspersed her work with precepts of practical morality, which would do honour to our greatest philosophers.

In conclusion, she offers some reflections on theatrical declamation. We have poetics, essays on music, on painting, and on all the arts. On the comic art, as it may be called, which is certainly the most difficult, we have only tradition. Like those historic facts, which, in their descent from age to age, at length assume a tinge of fable, the traditions of the theatre, confided to the unfaithful memory of individuals, have become unnatural and untrue as they

became old. The character which in the days of Moliere was a living character known in society, is at this day only a burlesque caricature, because, in each generation through which it has descended, it has received an addition. We ought then to preserve with gratitude the observations offered by those who have been distinguished on the stage. It is necessary to fix this great art by written tradition and fixed precepts.—Baron was the first actor of his time. Fifty years after him Le Kain appeared; and some contemporaries pretend that he has not yet had a successor. Whence comes this? Because there are no fixed principles; because the discoveries and observations made by great performers perish with them; and their

successors, obliged to commence the study of their art by their own observations, throw it back to its origin.

Who better qualified than madame Clairon to fix these principles? After twenty years of brilliant success, one has a right to give advice as a lesson. She was one of the most illustrious actresses of her time: and I shall conclude by citing an anecdote inserted in the Encyclopedia by one of her contemporaries, and which proves to what a high degree of perfection she had carried her art:

" Madame Clairon, who plays the " character of Ariane with so much " spirit and truth, received one even-

" ing those warm plaudits which she
" so well merited. In that scene where
" Ariane inquires, with her confidante,
" who can be her rival, at this verse—

" Is it Megiste, Egle, who renders him faithless?

" the actress saw a man who, with
" tears in his eyes, leaned towards
" her, and cried out in a smothered
" voice—'No! No! it is Phédre!'——
" This was the voice of nature ap-
" plauding the perfection of art."

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE PUBLICISTE.*

Issy, near Paris, 25th Thermidor.

CITIZEN,

I READ in your journal of the 25th instant, an article which announces an edition of my Memoirs, published in Germany, and in the German language. I did entrust the manuscript of my Reflections upon the Dramatic Art, and my own Memoirs, to a foreigner, and a man of letters, whom I greatly love and esteem. The intimate knowledge I possess of his principles and

* This letter was printed in this journal on the 28th Thermidor, 6th year.

morality induces me to reject the idea of his having deceived me by such a publication. If I was to name my friend, all who are acquainted with him would do him the same justice. The edition cannot but be a surreptitious one.

My intention was, that this work should not have appeared till ten years after my death; but this accident, and the fear of being thought deficient in gratitude to the public and my country, have determined me to publish it. I declare then, that the only edition I can avow is, the one printed in French, under my own inspection, and which shall be published as soon as possible.

I conjure you, citizen, to rest assured I shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of the very handsome manner in which your correspondent has been pleased to speak of me.

(Signed)

CLAIRON.

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MEMOIRS

OF

HYPPOLITE CLAIRON.

In the year 1743, my youth, and the success with which I had appeared at the opera and the French theatre, procured me a considerable number of admirers, among whom were several worthy and sensible characters. M. de S., son of a merchant of Brittany, about thirty years of age, and possessing an handsome figure, with a cultivated understanding, was one of those who had made the deepest impression on me. His manners evinced the education of a gentleman, and of one used to the

best company. His reserve and timidity, which scarce allowed him to explain himself, even by his looks, made me distinguish him from among all my lovers. After I had been some time the object of his attentions, I permitted his visits at my house, and left him no room to doubt of the friendship with which he had inspired me. Perceiving I was of an easy and tender disposition, he was patient, trusting time would produce in my breast a stronger sentiment than that of friendship.—'Who can tell?' 'Who can say what may happen?' Such were his frequent remarks; but by answering with candour to all the questions which my reason or my curiosity dictated, he entirely ruined his cause.

Ashamed of being the son of a citizen, he had disposed of his effects, in order to expend the produce at Paris, under a more elevated title. That displeased me. To blush for himself seemed to me to justify the disdain of others. His humour was gloomy and melancholy. 'He was too well acquainted with men,' he would say, 'not todespise and shun them.' His plan was to live only for me, and that I should live for him alone;—that displeased me still more, as you may well imagine. I might have been content to have been restrained by a flowery wreath, but I could not brook being confined by a chain. I from that moment saw the necessity of destroying the flattering hope which nourished his attach-

ment, and of disallowing his frequent visits. This determination, which I persisted in, produced a serious indisposition, during which I rendered him every possible care: but my constant refusal to indulge the passion he entertained for me made the wound still deeper; and, unfortunately, his brother-in-law, to whom he had given a power of attorney to receive the property he was entitled to from the sale of his effects, left him in such extreme want of money that he was compelled to accept such loans as I could accommodate him with. This circumstance was a deep mortification to him.—You will perceive, my dear Henry, the importance of keeping this secret in your bosom. I respect his memory, and

would not abandon it to the insulting pity of mankind. Preserve the same religious silence which I have now for the first time violated, but have only done out of my profound esteem for you.

At length he recovered his property, but never his health. I considered his absence from me would be to his advantage, and therefore constantly refused both his letters and his visits.

Two years and a half passed between our first acquaintance and his death. He entreated me to assuage by my presence the last moments of his life. My engagements prevented me complying with his request. He died in the pre-

sence of his domestics, and an old lady whom he had alone for some time suffered to attend him. He then lodged upon the Rampart, near la Chaussée d'Antin, which had just begun to be built. I resided in la Rue de Bussy, near la Rue de Seine, and Abbey of St. Germain. My mother, and several of my friends, generally supped with me. My visitors were, an intendant of the Privy Purse, whose friendship was of infinite service to me; the good Pipelet, whom you formerly knew and admired; and Roseley, one of my companions at the theatre, a young man of respectable birth and talents. The suppers of this period, though the company was small, were much more entertaining than the most expensive

fêtes have been for these forty years past. It was at one of those suppers, and when I had been singing an air with which my friends expressed themselves extremely delighted, that, just as the clock struck eleven, our ears were struck with the most piercing cry I had ever heard; its long continuance and piteous sound astonished every one. I fainted away, and was near a quarter of an hour insensible.

The intendant was amorous and jealous. When I revived, he said to me with some degree of spleen, "that the signals of my rendezvous were somewhat too noisy." I answered, "that I was mistress of myself, and at liberty to receive at all hours whoever I thought

proper, therefore signals were altogether useless; and" added I, "that which you call one is of too dreadful a nature to announce the soft moments dedicated to love." My paleness, the tremor which still remained upon me, the tears which flowed in spite of my efforts, and my intreaties that my company would remain with me a part of the night, convinced them I was ignorant of the cause which had produced the noise. We reasoned as to what it could have been the effect of, and determined to set people to watch in the street, in order to aſcertain it, in case it ſhould be repeated.

Every one in the house, my friends, my neighbours, the police even, have

heard the same sort of cry repeated under my windows at the same hour, and appearing to proceed from the air. There was no doubt of its being intended for my hearing in particular; for though I rarely supped in town, yet when I did, the cry was never heard; but often, when I was conversing with my mother and my servants upon the subject, it would burst forth in the midst of us. Upon one evening, the president de B., at whose house I had supped, conducted me to my own house. As he was wishing me good night, at my door, the cry alarmed us. He, as well as nearly all Paris, can vouch for the truth of this history. The president was so terrified, that he

was conducted to his carriage more dead than alive.

Another time I asked my friend Roseley to accompany me to la Rue St. Honorè, to buy some articles of dress, and pay a visit to mademoiselle de St. P., who lodged near St. Dennis's gate. The only subject of our conversation was the spirit, as he called it. This young man, though he ridiculed my adventure, was struck with the singularity of it. He pressed me to invoke the phantom, and promised to give full belief to it if it answered me. Whether it was owing to my weakness or daring boldness, I know not, but I did as he had re-

quired of me. The same cry was uttered three different times, with a degree of rapidity and ſhrillness terrible beyond expression. When we arrived at our friend's house, we were obliged to have assistance to get out of the coach, where we were found sitting in a state of terror and insensibility.

After this scene I remained some months without hearing any thing of it: I thought I was quit of it for ever, but I deceived myself.

All the theatrical exhibitions had been ordered to Verſailles, on account of the marriage of the dauphin. We were to repair there in three days; and

there were some of the actresses for whom lodgings had not been secured. Among others, madame Granvalle had none. She remained with me, expecting in vain that one would be procured for her. At three in the morning I offered to share my chamber with her; it had two beds, one for myself, and another for my servant: she accepted my offer, and I gave her the least of the two, and got into my own. While my servant was undressing herself to lay by the side of me, I said to her, "We are now almost at the end of the world, and, besides, the weather is unusually tempestuous—the cry would be rather embarrassed to find us out here." It was at that instant uttered. Madame Granvalle thought all

the demons of hell were in the room. She ran in her chemise from the top to the bottom of the house, and suffered no one to sleep during the remainder of the night. This however was the last time I was troubled with the noiſe.

Seven or eight days after, while I was enjoying myself in my uſual ſociety, the clock struck eleven, and immediately the firing of a gun was heard against one of my windows. We were all sensible of it, we saw the fire, and heard the shot; but upon examining, the window had received no kind of damage. We concluded that some person had a design upon my life; and that having failed, it was necessary to guard againſt a similar attempt in fu-

ture. The intendant went directly to the house of M. de Marville, the lieutenant of police, who was his friend. He came, attended by proper officers, and examined the house opposite mine, but without discovering any ground for suspicion. The following day the street was narrowly watched—the officers of police had their eyes upon every house, but, notwithstanding all their attention, at the same hour for three whole months, the same discharge was always heard against the same frame of glass, though no one could ever discover from whence it proceeded.—This fact is attested by all the registers of police.

I became so accustomed to this new

trick of the spirit, as I supposed, that had before haunted me, that I no longer attended to it: and one evening, at the hour of eleven, when it was extremely warm, I opened the window, and the intendant and myself leant over the balcony. The instant the clock struck eleven the gun was discharged as usual, and we both fell upon the floor apparently lifeless. When we came to ourselves, and found we were not hurt, and acknowledged to each other that at the moment the gun was fired we had each of us received a violent slap on the face, we could scarce refrain laughing at the circumstance. The next day nothing particular happened; but the day after I was invited by mademoiselle Dumesnil to an entertainment she gave.

I entered a coach at eleven o'clock with my waiting-woman. The moon ſhone bright, and we proceeded along the Boulevards or Suburbs, which were then just beginning to be built upon. We were examining those houses which had been lately erected, when my waiting-maid said, "Is it not here M. de S. died?"—"From the information he gave me, that should be the place," said I, pointing with my finger to a house which was before us. The explosion of a gun was immediately heard—the coachman urged his horses, conceiving himself attacked by robbers, and arrived at the place of rendezvous scarce sensible. For my part, I was impressed with a degree of terror which it was long before I got

the better of. This was the last time I was terrified by the firing of the gun.

It was however succeeded by a noise like the clapping of hands.—The partiality of the public had so long accustomed me to this interruption, that I for some time paid no attention to it. My friends remarked it, and told me they constantly heard it at eleven o'clock, close to my door: they could distinguish no one, and were convinced what they heard must have been the result of some supernatural cause.

As the noise had nothing terrible in it, I did not observe what length of time it continued. It was followed by

melodious sounds, which I paid as little attention to. It seemed that a celestial voice sung the most tender and pathetic airs: the music commenced at the corner of the street, and concluded at the door of my house. Like all the preceding sounds which had been heard, it baffled all discovery as to the cause.—About the end of two years I was ceased to be disturbed altogether.

The house I inhabited was extremely noisy, on account of its proximity to the market, and the number of people who lived in that quarter. I required retirement for my studies, as well as on account of my health, which was much impaired. I was rather in easy circumstances, and wished for a

better situation. I was told of a small house in la Rue des Marais, which let for 200 livres, where Racine was said to have lived forty years with his family. I was informed it was there he had composed his immortal works, and that there he had died; that afterwards it had been occupied by the tender Lecouvreur, who had ornamented and ended his days in it. The walls of the house, said I, will be alone sufficient to make me feel the sublimity of the author, and acquire the talents necessary for an actress; it is in this sanctuary I will live and die. I took it, and put a bill upon the apartments I had before occupied. Among the number who applied for them were several persons attracted solely by cu-

riosity. The public had never seen me out of the theatre: they wished to behold me divested of a crown, and unsupported by the characters of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, reduced to the simple rank of a Bourgeoise.—I flattered myself the alteration would not appear to my prejudice, as I still retained the same sentiments and habits; but you know I am rather short, and that I was supposed by those who had never seen me off the stage to be six feet high. At home I appeared in my natural form: I never had recourse to art except at the theatre. I was fearful that when surveyed off the stage the public would diminish twice as much from my stature as it had been accustomed to add to it. I was sen-

sible that those who avoided imposing on the world had nothing to fear from its censure. Happily my nation was not much given to reflection; and I had the satisfaction of finding that the public still continued to preserve the same opinion with regard to my figure.

What a digression! you will say: Your history is already too long; abridge it if you please, but do not add to it.—I agree you are right, but you have required this history from me; therefore, as I am ignorant what you wish to be informed of, I have thought it my duty not to omit any circumstance. I cannot trace a single word of it without recalling you to my imagination. Is

it my fault, if, notwithstanding the years I have passed, and the misfortunes I have suffered, I still preserve the illusions of a soul characterised by sensibility? It is for you I write; I imagine I am ſpeaking to you, that you are listening to my history, filled as it is with tiresome repetitions, with that sweetcomplacency which renders you so dear to your friends and valuable to society. Alas! it is with the deepest regret I tear myself from the agreeable chimera.

But to resume my subject:

I was informed that an elderly lady wished to see my apartments, and that she was waiting there for me. It has ever been my principle to express the

greatest deference to age. I attended her. An emotion which I was not mistress of made me survey her from head to foot. This emotion increased when I perceived she experienced the same feelings. I was only able to request her to take a seat: ſhe accepted my offer. We continued some time silent; but our eyes left no room to doubt the extreme desire we had to address each other. She knew who I was, but I knew her not: ſhe felt that the task was imposed on her to break silence. The following was the converſation that took place between us:

"It is, madam, a long time since I have been impreſſed with the moſt anxious deſire to become acquainted

with you. As I never frequent the theatre, and am unknown to those whom you honour with your friendship, I was apprehensive, if I addressed you by letter, I might subject myself to a denial in consequence of my motives being misunderstood. The bill placed upon your apartments has procured me the happiness I wished for: pardon me when I confess it is not that which has brought me here, I am not rich enough to take them; nevertheless, I entreat you to let me see them. The place you have inhabited cannot but excite an interest. Your talents have a degree of celebrity which leaves no room to doubt the superior endowments of your mind. I perceive that I have not been deceived as to your figure; I

desire to know if the description I have received of your dwelling is as faithful: and I trust you will allow me to pursue my unhappy friend through all the scenes of his hope and despair."

"It appears to me, madam, that the agitation in which you behold me, and which every word you utter augments, makes it a duty I owe myself to inquire who you are, of whom you are speaking, and what your business is with me? My character will not allow me to be made the sport or the victim of any one!—Speak, or I shall leave you."

"I was, madam, the best friend of M. de S., and the only person he suffered to be with him during the

last moments of his life. We have both reckoned the days and hours while speaking of you: sometimes making you an angel, sometimes a devil;—I, continually persuading him to forget you,—he, constantly professing he should adore you to the grave. Your eyes bathed in tears, allow me to ask you, Why you have rendered him so miserable? and how, possessing a tender and sympathising soul, you could refuse him the consolation of seeing you, and of speaking to you for once only before he died?"

"We cannot command our hearts. M. de S. was possessed of merit, and many estimable qualities; but his gloomy, thoughtful, and despotic

disposition, made me equally dread his society, his friendship, and his love. To have made him happy, I must have renounced the pleasures of society, and even the exercise of my profession. I was poor and proud: I wished (and I hope I shall always possess the same disposition) not to depend upon any one but myself. The friendship with which he inspired me made me attempt every means to induce him to adopt sentiments more tranquil and equitable. As I could not effect this, and was persuaded that his derangement was less to be attributed to the excess of his passion than to the violence of his character, I formed and kept the firm resolution of separating myself entirely from him. I

refused to see him in his last moments, because the sight of him would have rent my heart; and I should have appeared too cruel had I refused him what he asked, and must have been wretched had I granted it him.—These, madam, are the motives of my conduct: I dare flatter myself no one will blame me."

"To condemn you would be unjust. It is only to our God, our parents, and our benefactors, we are bound to sacrifice ourselves. On this last point, I am sensible, it was not from you gratitude was due; but his situation and his passion overcame him, and your last refusal hastened his latter moments. He counted every minute till

half past ten, when his servant informed him you positively would not come to him. After a moment's silence, he took my hand in a paroxysm of despair, which terrified me, and exclaimed—'*Cruel woman! but she shall gain nothing. I will pursue her as much after my death as I have done during my life!*'—I endeavoured to calm him, but he was no more."

I think, my friend, I need not tell you the effect these last words had upon me. I thought all the powers of heaven and earth had united to torment my wretched life: but, at length, time and mature reason have restored calmness to my mind. "If," said I, "there is no Superior Being who directs this

world, it is impossible that one who is dead can be brought back to life. If there is a God—and all nature attests there is one—the attribute of his divinity is justice and goodness: he will never send into this abode of misery and sorrow those whom he has deigned to release from it.—What am I, that I should suppose he concerns himself with so humble an individual? How can I suppose that, on my account, he would derange the order of nature to manifest his anger or his goodness, or to point out to me the means of avoiding misery or guilt? Such cares may be worthy the Sovereign of the World, when the whole human race are the objects of them: but an individual is, perhaps, less in his

eyes than a grain of sand is in ours. Let us adore him, let us merit his mercies; but attempt not to scrutinise his ways!

By this mode of reasoning, and by various reflections which occurred to my mind, I attributed the extraordinary circumstances which had happened to me entirely to chance. I know not but they were the effect of chance; but I cannot deny that what is so called, has the greatest influence on what passes in the world.

Now rest awhile:—my history and reflections are finished; make what you can of them. If it is your intention that what I have written should pass

out of your own hands, I entreat you to suppress the initial letter of the name, and the entire name of the province.

I send you my original, that you may judge, by a labour so far above my strength, how inviolable and tender is the attachment I retain for you.

Adieu!

REFLECTIONS

UPON

THE DRAMATIC ART.

IT is the wish of many that I should write my sentiments relative to an art which I have long professed. It is supposed that the reflections I have made, in order to render myself supportable in the eyes of the public, may be of some use to those who are destined to pursue the same career. Perhaps the public, or, at least, the admirers of theatrical representations, will contemplate with some degree of pleasure the road I have followed, in order to acquire their favour. But re-

flection and writing are two such different things; it appears so extraordinary to me to comprehend any thing without the aid of physiognomy, gesture, and speech; I am so diffident of myself; that I tremble as much in taking up the pen as I once did in appearing before the public.—Friendship imposes the task upon me, and my compliant disposition cannot resist. Without any regular plan, perhaps without any system, but certainly without vanity, I am about to trace what I deem necessary to the attainment of this art,—an art much more difficult than it is generally supposed to be.

ENUNCIATION;

OR,

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE VOICE.

As it must be the chief object of the actress to be heard distinctly in all parts of the theatre, it is therefore an indispensable requisite that she should be possessed of a strong and sonorous voice.

In order that she may be enabled to give the necessary shade to the picture she means to represent, her voice must be clear, harmonious, flexible, and susceptible of every possible intonation.

A voice which is deficient in point of compass or expression can never be adequate to characters where the

stronger passions are displayed, such as Phédre, Orosmane, &c.

A lisping, or inarticulate mode of pronunciation, false tones, harsh sounds, or a provincial accent, are obstacles which are insurmountable in an actress who attempts vehemence, grandeur, justness, or sensibility of expression.

The verses of Racine and Voltaire are the most truly poetical and harmonious our language can boast: yet, let the same verses be recited by one who has an easy and clear delivery, and another who has a defective pronunciation, and you will perceive that she who possesses the clear delivery will divest them of no part of their beauty.—Mis-

tress of the faculty of managing her intonations, of extending or repressing her sounds as the sense may require, susceptible of every species of modulation, she expresses each verse in all its native charms and dignity; while the other, whose organs are defective, is obliged to speak slow, in order to be understood; or if she speaks fast, to give utterance to inarticulate sounds. The precision, the harmony, the elegance, the strength, the force, of the language and sentiment,—all are destroyed.

If we call to our mind all the actors and actresses who have appeared upon the stage, we shall find that the defect of which I am speaking is incompatible with great talents. A fine figure, or

the charms of youth and beauty, will sometimes induce the public to overlook defects in those who possess such attractions: but beauty and youth pass away. The hopes which may have been formed of those who have natural defects, which always increase with age, are seldom realised. I will mention madame Granvalle: this charming comedian, distinguished for her gracefulness, spirit, and vivacity, aided by what is called *theatrical decency*, has quitted the stage, where she will never be equalled in the character of genteel comedy, to which her talents were confined. Though not yet fifty years of age, she has been compelled to retire, in consequence of that disgust with which her lisping manner of speech

inspired the public, whose idol she had before been. Youth and beauty are charms highly esteemed in the world; but something more is required on the stage.

I agree, however, that there may be exceptions. A single imperfection may, in no respect, destroy that union of gaiety, spirit, talent, and ease, with which some are gifted, particularly in comedy:—the habit of stammering, which Poisson had, perhaps, added to his comic abilities, even in his youth. But, in general, to be perfectly understood is the first obligation of a comedian; and those who have impediments in their pronunciation should neither have the ambition, nor be suffered to tread the boards of a theatre.

STRENGTH.

A GOOD constitution is a material point:—there is no profession more fatiguing. Irritable nerves, weak lungs, or delicate constitutions, cannot long sustain the weight of tragic characters.

I have found, in the course of my time, a number of young authors and fine ladies who have thought that nothing was more easy than to perform Mahomet, Merope, &c.; that the author had done all that was necessary; that to learn the parts, and to leave the rest to Nature, was all the actor had to do. *Nature!*—how many use this word

without knowing its meaning.—The difference of sex, of age, of situation, of time, of countries, of manners, and of customs, demand different modes of expression. What infinite pains and study must it not require to make an actor forget his own character; to identify himself with every personage he represents; to acquire the faculty of representing love, hatred, ambition, and every passion of which human nature is susceptible,—every shade, every gradation by which those sentiments are depictured with their full extent of colouring and expression.

There are no arts or professions but have certain defined principles.—Are there then none required to direct the

tragedian? Is it only in the history of mankind he must obtain his information? Reading of itself would be nothing; he must meditate upon, and render himself familiar with, what he reads, even to its minutest details; he must adapt to every character the genius of the nation to which it belongs; he must reflect without intermission; repeat an hundred and an hundred times the same thing, in order to surmount the difficulties he meets with at every step. It is not enough to study the character: he must study the history of it, in order to develop the intention of the author, feel the beauties of his composition, and adapt his character to the general scope of the work: he must scrutinise the hearts of all connected with

the scene, attend to the relations they bear towards each other; and, finally, he must be able to comprehend why what he hears, and what he sees, is so represented or expressed.—Such are the private labours which an actor has to fulfil.

I am far from thinking that others may not infinitely exceed me. Those who possess a greater degree of energy, or enjoy a more perfect state of health, than falls to my lot, may discover sources of improvement which have escaped me: but for the little abilities I possess, I am indebted to the adoption of that course of study which I have traced. I was by nature strong and persevering: labour was a pleasure to

me; and it is only by having braved misery and death that I have completed the twenty years requisite to constitute an actor.—In addition to what I have said, the most arduous task is to be enumerated; it is, the indispensable necessity of having one's mind continually impressed with events the most dreadful and terrible, and with images of the most horrid nature. The actor who does not identify himself with the character he represents is like a scholar who repeats his lesson; but he who does so identify himself with the personage, he is pourtraying—whose tears seem the effect of Nature, who absorbs the idea of his own existence in the miseries of an assumed character;—such a person must be wretched: and

I maintain that it requires a degree of strength, almost beyond what human-nature is endowed with, to perform the characters of tragedy well for more than ten years.

To these labours must be added the study of different talents, and of different acquirements, of which I ſhall speak hereafter. To this must be added the fatigue of traverſing the country at ſtated ſeaſons, the trouble of rehearſals, the neceſſity of a general courſe of reading, the attention required with regard to dreſs, the care due to domeſtic affairs, and, laſtly, the fatigue of repreſentations. After this enumeration, it is unneceſſary to infer how indiſpenſable it is to poſſeſs a healthy and ſtrong conſtitution.

In recalling to mind my plan of study, I hope I shall be pardoned for observing, that I have often smiled at the folly of those who have upbraided me for having recourse to art. Alas! what should I have been without it? Could I have personated Roxane, Amenaïde, or Viriate? Should I be consistent if I was to apply my own feelings and habits to such characters? Doubtless not.—How am I enabled to substitute the ideas, sentiments, and feelings, which should distinguish those characters, in lieu of my own? It is by art alone it can be done: for if ever I have seemed to personate them in a manner purely natural, it is because my studies, joined to some happy gifts which I may have derived from nature, have conducted me to the perfection of art.

EXAMPLE,

ON THE NECESSITY OF REFERRING EVERY THING TO ART.

THE same actress commonly undertakes the very opposite characters of Ariane and Dido. These two personages have to manifest the same love, the same fear, and the same despair. If the actress, who is to represent them, should take Nature merely for her guide, is it to be supposed that the same expression of the different passions which is required in one of those characters would be proper in the other? Dido is a widow and absolute queen; her experience, and habits of commanding, allow her to assume an haughty look, an imperious tone of

voice, and a degree of dignity in her reproaches. Ariane, on the contrary, is a fugitive and suppliant princess; she ought to assume a downcast look when she is assuring her lover of her affection; her reproaches should be made in mild and timid accents; the modesty of her character should restrain the violence of her despair; and it is only when she is convinced of the perfidy of her sister she should entirely abandon herself to the emotions of grief. To personate these different characters, the actress must arrange her physiognomy and her deportment; she must assume gestures, mild or violent, disdainful or timid, as the different characters may require them.—Let me ask, can all this be done without the assistance of art?

It is more difficult to find good actors than good actresses. Those who are destined to the stage are, for the most part, born of obscure and indigent parents. The impossibility of receiving a liberal education, or of obtaining the advantage of masters and books, the society in which those in indifferent circumstances are forced to live, prevent the exertion of those talents which, in a different situation, would have manifested themselves.

Women have greater advantages.—There is very little difference in the education of females, except with regard to those of the highest rank. A reasonable portion of ability, a good figure, and a fair reputation, generally

are sufficient to procure them the protection of their own sex, and are sure to command the homage of the other. Men of liberality and gallantry encourage them; they are more readily admitted into the society of men of letters, and what is called good company; they have better opportunities of hearing, seeing, and comparing; their ideas are enlarged, their reason is improved, their understanding increased; and when sense and beauty unite in them, their address, their sensibility, their vivacity, and an innate sentiment which makes them think they may pretend to any thing, give them the power of appearing wherever their inclinations lead them.

Observe the difference between those

women who are originally destined to the seraglio of the Grand Seignor, compared with what they are when the preference of their master withdraws them from the rank of slaves. Racine has described them in the character of Roxane: and every woman, who is conscious of her genius as an actress, ought to make herself perfect in that character.

Since the theatre has existed, we can only reckon three actors capable of performing the very first-rate characters.

These are Baron, Dufrene, and Le Kain.—Baron had the advantage of being the pupil of Moliere. He was a man of great ability, had a command-

ing figure, and passed his life amidst persons of the first rank in France.

Like other actors, he declaimed, and recited verses in his youth; but, in order to exalt himself to a level with, and to emulate those persons of superior rank with whom he was admitted as a companion, he familiarised himself to the simple and true grandeur; he displayed their manners in the characters he represented; and it is to him we are indebted for the first lessons of that art which is always so difficult to attain.

Dufrene was more dazzling than profound.—He was noble, but never vehement; full of warmth, but without order, without principles, without any of

those great features which characterise genius. He was indebted for his success to the superior beauty of his person, and the excellence of his delivery.—He is, however, a proof that the public in his time did not require from an actor so much as they do at present.

Le Kain was bred an artisan. His figure was displeasing and aukward, his stature was low, his voice discordant, and his constitution weak; yet, with all these disadvantages, he launched from the workshop to the theatre; and, without any other guide than genius, without any assistance but art, he attained the reputation of the greatest actor, and the most interesting and dignified of men.—I am not speaking either of his

first essays, or his latter exertions: in the former he doubted, attempted, and was often disappointed; a circumstance that could not fail to happen. In the latter his strength did not second his intentions. For want of physical faculties he was often tedious and declamatory; but in the meridian of his faculties he approached nearest of any to perfection.

I must, however, acknowledge, without partiality, that he did not give the sentiments of every author with equal force.

He could not do justice to Corneille. The characters of Racine were too simple for him. He pourtrayed the characters of neither of them well, except in

some scenes which allowed his genius; those striking bursts of passions, without which he never appeared to advantage.

His perfection was only complete in the tragedies of Voltaire.—Like the author, he constantly appeared noble, true, sensible, profound, vehement, or sublime. The talents of Le Kain were of that class, that you overlooked the disadvantages of his person.

His studies had been directed to their proper object; he was acquainted with a variety of languages, he read much, and formed an accurate judgment of what he read; but without recourse to art he could never have made an actor.

Allow me now to revert to those principles from which I have in some measure digressed. All men are not endowed with a creative genius. I will endeavour to direct those who are inadequate to the pursuit of an original system of their own, and for that purpose will resume my examination.

MEMORY.

It is only by constantly varying dramatic representations, that the theatre can have attractions for the public; it is therefore necessary to have a change of performances ready; consequently, the memory of the performers is a circumstance of the chiefest importance.

He would be an impolitic manager who should engage an actor who had not convinced him he was possessed of what is indispensably necessary to the profession,—a ready and correct memory.

The actor who has a tardy and sluggish memory cannot but be inadequate to the study of verse; his attention is so much engaged in retaining the words, that he has no time for reflection:—it is impossible for him to study the meaning of his author; his ideas are restrained; he can adopt no principle on which to comprehend the character he studies; he is unable to form comparisons, he cannot do jus-

tice to his author; but, on the contrary, is sure to derogate from the dignity of the personage he represents.

One may, without study, possess a natural ability, and by that alone sometimes be enabled to give a just effect to an author's sentiments. There are many characters where such natural ability is all that is requisite.

Brittanicus, Iphigenie, Hyppolite, Palmyre, are of this description, provided the person who represents them joins to such a natural talent the advantages of youth, an harmonious voice, and a graceful person. These kind of characters are within the reach of medio-

crity of talents; those of Agrippine, Achille, Phédre, and Mahomet, require higher abilities.

The persons appointed to perform these characters have as much to study, to play them well, as the authors had to describe them.

Without a quick, sure, and retentive memory, it is impossible for an actor to unite such profound studies with his daily labours. Genius alone would be insufficient: indeed, I doubt much, whether a person can possess much genius or ability without a great memory?

Without genius or ability one may yet learn any thing with facility: but if

to those qualities are joined good sense, docility, a flexible voice, and a noble and elegant figure, we may rely with confidence upon them.

In order to maintain the illusion of the scene, every personage of the drama ought to take as much care to keep within the limits of the character he performs as the public are anxious to exceed it in their imaginations.—When an actor has considered his powers with respect to the three points I have enumerated; namely, pronunciation, strength, and memory; he may then be able to form some judgment as to what he can undertake with hopes of success.

EXTERIOR.

THE English manners admit on the stage what in this country would be considered as highly disgusting. Richard the Third is represented with all the defects he derived from nature. As it is easier to deform than improve, it therefore requires less efforts to assume a vulgar than a dignified air; but as he, who in the same character avails himself of both, has more resources than he who confines himself to one, I am apt to think the dramatic art is less difficult at London than at Paris.—The French critics only admit of elegant and noble figures in tragedy; they would laugh to see the personage, who was to excite their terror or pity, appear with

an humped back, or distorted limbs. Every one is sensible, that the greatest monarch may be as ill made, as awkward, and have as vulgar an air as the lowest peasant in his kingdom; that bodily infirmities, physical defects, and low habits, seem to equalise him with the rest of mankind; but, nevertheless, the respect which his rank impresses, the sentiment of fear or love which he inspires, and the pageantry with which he is surrounded, always impart to him a commanding aspect.

Tragedy presents the most faithful picture of the policy, the crimes, the virtues, and the miseries of the masters of the world. All the personages who represent it are noble, all their actions

important, all their consequences serious; but, after all, it is but a representation; we are all sensible of it; and, without the concurrence of every possible illusion, the public would only see and hear the actor, and would lose the pleasure of being deceived.

Achilles is announced, or any other hero who has just vanquished singly an host of formidable foes; or a prince possessed of such charms and attractions, that the greatest princess would, without regret, sacrifice her throne, and even her life, to him. His representative appears on the stage, and turns out to be a diminutive puny man, of a disgusting figure, without strength, without voice. What then becomes of the illusion? I

do not conceive there can be any: yet I have seen the caricature I have just described assume any part that was offered him, and receive the most unbounded applause*.

O! you, who are destined to this thorny career, avoid such an example. The error of the public is momentary; in general its judgment is severe, enlightened, and capable of discerning talents. The censure of the pit can prevent any actor's outstepping the modesty of Nature.—However some may be mean or impudent enough to cabal for the purpose of obtaining partial applause, they are certain the public will, in the end, form a proper estimate of

* Le Sieur M——.

them; and men of taste and discrimination must detect their faults.—Actors, when left to rise or fall by their own merits, will more seriously attend to their duties: they will feel the necessity of meriting those plaudits which they cannot purchase, and which form the only consolation of their profession. Endeavour to possess what is necessary to please the public taste; never appear upon the theatre without having received from nature those gifts which such a profession demands, or, at least, without having the means and the inclination of attaining, by art and study, an equivalent in lieu of what nature has denied you.

This is my advice to all who wish

to perform the characters of tragedy with credit to themselves.

TYRANTS.

In casting the character of a tyrant, I would recommend him to be personated by a man who is tall, thin, and hollow-eyed, dark thick eye-brows, and a gloomy countenance, one who never speaks or makes the slightest motion without an air of mystery, and who, altogether, has the appearance of a man absorbed in thought and devoured by remorse.

It appears to me, that an actor of this description will have little more to do than to learn his part; three fourths of his studies will have been finished beforehand.

KINGS.

I would recommend, for the character of a king, a man of a majestic deportment and venerable appearance, with a commanding tone of voice, expressive of severity and mildness, and a noble and stately gate;—in short, an appearance at once manifesting the dignity of a sovereign, the experience of a sage, and the serenity of a philosopher.

PRINCIPAL MALE CHARACTERS.

Those who perform the principal male characters should be above the middle size, and neither corpulent nor lean: a corpulent man appears vulgar on the stage, and a lean one insignificant. He

should be well made, and have no apparent defect; he should combine an appearance of strength with elegance.

If he is handsome, so much the better, provided his beauty is masculine: delicate features would be a defect.

These characters demand the greatest expression, and the utmost command of countenance. The actor must be able, by his features, to express every motion of the soul. The countenance which remains immoveable proves that the actor has no feeling: if his features are too much in motion, it shows ignorance: Nature must be the guide in this respect. The countenance is only

expressive on the stage, when the features are large, the eyes full, the eyebrows marked, the mouth rather projecting, and the hair brown. Small features lose all their effect at a very little distance; a small eye may be arch and lively, but never can be commanding; a mouth that falls inwards can never express grief; and fair hair is unbecoming on the stage.

ON YOUNG MEN PERFORMING PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

Young men may be allowed to attempt principal characters, merely to try their strength, without having prepared themselves by that previous study I have recommended; yet there are some characters, such as the Cid,

Don Pedro in Ines, and Seyde in Mahomet, which cannot be performed but by persons of great talents. The public, however, excuses faults in young men who are commencing the profession of actors. It is sensible the difficulties they have to encounter are only to be conquered by long and laborious study. By this indulgence it encourages them; but, unfortunately, if they meet with a little success, they flatter themselves they are equal to every character, and thus their vanity ruins them. The fable of the frog is the history of many young actors whom I have known. I would advise that no one should offer himself a candidate for public favour, till he has acquired the means necessary to enable

him to attempt any character whatever within the scope of his genius.

CONFIDANTS.

The managers of theatres, and even the actors themselves, imagine, that any person is competent to perform the characters of confidants. I am far from being of that opinion: these characters require an attentive and accurate judgment. They are often the representatives of governors, princes, ministers, generals, embassadors, captains, or favourites; they are the depositories of all secrets of state; they are entrusted with the most important commands. Is it possible that young actors, or those without dignity, consequence, or, as is often the case, pro-

foundly ignorant, can support such characters?

These characters, often too much neglected by authors, demand actors whose talents are cultivated, and whose judgments are matured, otherwise they excite the laughter of the audience by their manner of reciting the verses of those poets, whose style is peculiar or obsolete. To give verse its due effect, requires a voice susceptible of every intonation, and a countenance of the most expressive nature: there should, therefore, be a scrupulous attention paid to those who are destined to perform the particular characters I am speaking of. Ignorance and folly should be equally banished from the theatre.

I remember, at one time, when I was extremely ill, and was engaged to perform Ariane, I was apprehensive the fatigue of the character would be too much for me to support,—I therefore had a chair placed upon the stage, in case I should find it necessary. In effect, my strength failed me in the middle of the fifth act, while I was expressing my despair at the flight of Phédre and Theseus. I fell backwards in the chair, almost in a state of insensibility. The judgment and sagacity of mademoiselle Brilland, who performed my confidante, suggested to her mind how to fill up the scene by a stage artifice of the most interesting nature. She fell at my feet, took hold

of one of my hands, which she bathed with tears; her words, scarce articulate, were interrupted by sighs, and she thus gave me time to recover myself. Her looks, her motions, penetrated my very soul; I fell in her arms; and the public, deeply affected, rewarded her presence of mind by the loudest applause.

A common rate actress would have thrown the whole stage into confusion, and the piece would not have been finished.

DIVISION OF WOMEN'S CHARACTERS.

All female characters in tragedy require, without exception, actresses of

a noble and dignified deportment. They consist of queens, princesses, or ladies of the highest rank.—I shall divide them into four classes.

Such as represent mothers,—such as represent vehement and impassioned characters,—such as represent tender characters,—and such as represent confidantes.

It is rare that the same actress possesses power and talent sufficient to personate all these different characters: besides, we sometimes find three of them united in the same piece. It is therefore indispensable that there should be three actresses equally eminent in each of them.

MOTHERS.

I would recommend that those who perform the characters of mothers, who have children grown up, such as Cleopatre, Agrippine, or Semiramis, should not be too young.

It appears impossible that women under twenty years of age should be actuated by any other sentiments than those of the duties of their sex, the impressions of nature, and the emotions of love.

The study of the human heart, and the different passions connected with it, demand a mature reason, a judgment formed upon experience, reflection, and example.

These can only be acquired by time; but the public require no more from young beginners, than that they should justify hopes of their future celebrity. Persons who have arrived at years of experience would scarce be induced to offer themselves candidates for public favour on the stage. Prejudice and despotism render the situation of an actor almost insupportable. It is youth and inexperience alone that justifies such a choice. But still I would have no actress personate the character of a mother before five and twenty. It would be better to defer it till their beauty was rather on the decline. It is necessary also they should be above the middle size. Women of low stature have seldom a dignified appearance. Those

who are too tall are generally deficient in grace; besides, the customs of the theatre do not allow of too great a contrast in the figures of male and female characters.

VEHEMENT AND IMPASSIONED CHARACTERS.

Those which I distinguish under this title are the characters of Emilie, Electre, and Hermione. To give them their due effect requires a grandeur and haughtiness of deportment, an expressive countenance, and a commanding voice. Every motion should announce courage and boldness; but care must be taken not to confound an air of boldness with that of assurance and audacity. The former arises from an elevation of the soul; the latter is generally the

effect of its degradation. The nobleness of mind, the purity of manners, and the modesty of the sex, should never be lost sight of. They should be always discernible, however disguised by love, despair, or vengeance.

It is said that Nature has but one voice. I admit it, provided due attention is paid to the rank, the manners, and the situation of the character by which our feelings are attempted to be excited.

Every situation in life has its different modifications; the tradesman possesses not the consequence of the merchant who employs him; the merchant has not the same degree of confidence when

addressing a nobleman; the nobleman approaches those who command him with an air of subordination; and all, without exception, bow respectfully before their general superior.

The theatre is only a representation of what passes in real life. The purity of language employed in tragedy, the importance of the events, the dignity of the personages, sufficiently prove that nothing is left to the arbitrary judgment of the actor; that an air of vulgarity or triteness of expression can never be allowed; that popular and licentious manners are never to be resorted to as models; and that it is impossible to unite, on the same canvas, a Raphael and a Calot.

TENDER CHARACTERS.

Tender characters require a countenance characteristic of mildness, a soft and expressive tone of voice, a great degree of sensibility, a timid and delicate demeanour, a modesty of manners, a dignified deportment, and an elegant figure; but not tall, at least not above the middle size. Women whose figures are small and delicate appear younger on the stage than others: and for these characters, those who possess the appearance of youth are more likely to move and excite our interest.

The principal part of these characters represent young girls without experience, timid and fearful of avowing that love they feel themselves, or have

inspired in others. I advise the actress who performs such characters never to lose sight of that air of purity and candour which her age and situation require. In describing the tender impressions of love, she must carefully avoid whatever may give rise to ideas of voluptuousness. The voice, the manners, or the looks of a coquette, or woman of intrigue, can never be reconciled with innocence. Tragedy ought to be the school of pure manners, as it is of great actions.

CONFIDANTES.

I recommend for the character of a confidante, a woman of an age calculated to inspire confidence, of a countenance expressive of wisdom and experience, a person attentive to the scene

that is going forward, and apparently interested in it. She should have no pretensions to obtrude herself in a conspicuous point of view, except on such an occasion as I have just before cited.

DRESS.

It is my advice to actresses in general, to pay the most scrupulous attention to dress. Dress adds considerably to the illusion of the spectators; and, when it is appropriate, it gives a degree of confidence to the actor.—That it should be exactly so is scarce practicable:—to adopt the dress of past ages, in every respect, would be indecent and ridiculous. The dresses of antiquity display too much of the figure: they are properly appli-

cable only to statues and paintings; but in supplying this defect, we ought to preserve, in some measure, the style of them, and show our desire to imitate, as far as possible, the luxury or simplicity of the times we are describing. Fillets, flowers, pearls, veils, and stones of different colours, were the only ornaments with which women were acquainted before the establishment of the commerce of the Indies, and the conquest of the New World.

I particularly advise tragic actresses to avoid the fashions of the day. The head-dress worn by the French at the moment I am writing, the extravagant mode of wearing the hair, imparts an appearance of disproportion to the fi-

gure, spoils the countenance, conceals the motions of the neck, and presents an air of stiffness and formality inconsistent with that ease and freedom required upon the stage. The best and only mode proper to be followed, is to adopt, as near as you can, that of the costume of the character you are performing.

An actress, in arranging her dress, should particularly attend to the situation of the person she represents. Age, austerity, and grief, ill accord with the decorations of youth, gaiety, and happiness. Hermione adorned with flowerets would appear ridiculous: the violence of her character, and the sorrow that consumes her, reject the idea of her devoting much time to the toi-

lette. She may have a magnificent habit; but it ought to have an appearance of negligence, and show that her mind is not occupied about dress. The first appearance of an actress ought to prepare the public for the character she is about to pourtray.

ON THE DANGER OF TRADITIONS.

Ignorance and fancy produce so many contradictions on the stage, that it is impossible I should be able to refer to all of them: but there is one which I cannot pass over in silence,—it is that of seeing Cornelie appear clad in black.

The sailing of the ship, in which she escaped but a few moments before the assassination of her spouse, and her ar-

rival at Alexandria, could not possibly have allowed her sufficient time to provide herself with widow's weeds; and, most assuredly, the Roman ladies had not the precaution to carry them among the rest of their wardrobe. The celebrated Lecouvreur, when he painted Cornelie in such a dress, proved that he took the idea from the theatre. Such an authority as he is ought to be certainly paid some deference to; but, notwithstanding the great reputation he has acquired, I dare flatter myself that, when he committed this striking error, he must have been actuated by some reason which I am ignorant of, and that he was sensible of the impropriety of it.—I have seen Electre played in a rose-coloured dress, elegantly set off with black

and white. I have, therefore, concluded, that tradition is not a proper criterion to follow; and that, before we adopt it, we ought strictly to examine into its propriety.

UPON THE USE OF WHITE PAINT.

The use of white paint is now almost general upon the stage. This borrowed charm, of which no one is the dupe, and which all agree in condemning, spoils and discolours the complexion, weakens and dims the eye-sight, absorbs the whole countenance, conceals the expressive motion of the muscles, and produces a kind of contradiction between what we hear and what we see.

I had rather we should have recourse to the custom of using masks, like those

of the ancients. There would be at least this advantage, that the time thrown away in painting the face might be employed in improving the delivery.

Is it possible that an actress, whose countenance is enamelled with paint, and, consequently, incapable of any motion, can give expression to the passions of rage, terror, despair, love, or anger?

Every motion of the soul is expressed through the medium of the countenance: the extension of the muscles, the swelling of the veins, the blush upon the face, all evince those inward emotions, without which great talents cannot display themselves. There is no character in which the expression of the counte-

nance is not of the utmost importance. To feel a character, and to show by the motion of the countenance that the soul is agitated by what it feels, is a talent of equal consequence in an actress with any she can possess.

It is by the countenance alone you can distinguish between irony and jest.

A voice, more or less raised or depressed, or more or less tremulous, is insufficient to express such or such a sentiment of terror, or such or such a sentiment of fear. The countenance alone is enabled to mark its degrees.

As it is my own plan of study which I am endeavouring to inculcate, I think

it necessary in this place to state what happened to myself in the character of Monimie.

In studying this character, I found, in the fourth act,

Les dieux qui m' inspiraient, et qui j'ai mal suivis,
M'ont fait taire *trois fois* par de secrets avis.

That is,

The gods who inspired me, but whose admonitions I neglected, thrice *secretly warned me to be silent.*

In the preceding act, however, where Mithridate makes her acknowledge her secret, I could only discover *two* instances in which she *hesitated* to betray it.

I consulted all the editions of Racine—they all had it *trois fois*—the actresses,

who performed the character, all said *trois fois*;—from every inquiry I could make, I assured myself that mademoiselle Lecouvreur said *trois*. Although *deux* would not have been so harmonious, yet the measure of the verse would still have been perfect. I, however, presumed that Racine had his reasons for preferring the one to the other. I could discover no tradition to direct me; it did not become me to alter the text of so great a man; and I could not submit to say what appeared to me to have been an error. I therefore endeavoured, by the expression of my countenance, to supply the want of the *third* hesitation; and when Mithridate says,

——Servez avec son frère,
Et vendez aux Romains le sang de votre père,

I advanced, and, by the motion of my features, appeared as if I was just going to tell what I knew..... At that instant I seemed to be overcome by an impression of terror, which prevented my giving utterance to my thoughts.

The public, who had never seen any one attempt this before, gave me full credit for it; and, by their applause, sanctioned its propriety.

But if my countenance had been enamelled with white paint, I could not have sufficiently commanded my features,—I should have lost the pleasure of being applauded, and the glory of having discovered the meaning of Racine.

I am not against giving every assistance to Nature: I have often myself borrowed assistance. Generally labouring under an ill state of health, yet, unremitting in my labours, the paleness of death was often upon my countenance. I had remarked in others, that nothing was so injurious to the expression of the features as having pale lips or pale ears. A little art gave them the appearance of florid health: I darkened the colour of my eyebrows, as the character I was to perform required; I did the same thing to my hair, with different coloured powders; but far from concealing, in the least degree, those features which give animation and expression to the whole countenance. — I have ever made the ana-

tomy of the head my particular study, in order that I might thereby be enabled to dispose it in positions most calculated to display it to advantage*.

A white skin is doubtless agreeable: it communicates a charm to the whole figure; it imparts an air of greater sprightliness and animation—the blue veins it discovers are always considered as beauties.

But that whiteness which is acquired by paint covers the countenance with a thick enamel, which conceals and destroys every feature. The pores are

* Those who have an inclination for such a study would do well to read the description of the human figure, in Buffon's Natural History, vol. iv. p. 278. oct. edition.

filled with the pernicious ingredients of which the paint is composed; and the fear the person who wears it is constantly under, of deranging it by too much action, compels her to keep her face always in one posture:—besides, I know no kind of coquetry more troublesome, humiliating, or useless. Whoever has recourse to it is always afraid of being surprised before her face is made up: she cannot refer to herself any compliment that may be paid her: and I again repeat, that it is a custom of which no one is the dupe.

TALENTS

NECESSARY TO BE ACQUIRED FOR THE STAGE.

DANCING AND DRAWING.

IN order to be able to tread the stage with ease and grace, to give facility to the motions of the body, dignity to the whole appearance, and to prevent the acquirement of habits repugnant to nature, it is indispensably necessary that those who dedicate themselves to a theatrical profession should pay the utmost attention to the art of dancing: they must carefully avoid contracting the air and manners of a dancing-master; but, in every other respect, a knowledge of the art is requisite.

It were to be wished that every actor should be more or less initiated in the art of drawing: they would thereby become more susceptible of the good effect of preserving proper distances; they would more easily discover the point of perspective, which is so important on the stage, both with respect to their figure and their dress. In pantomimic representations, or pieces calculated for show, the performers who are to set off the principal personages are placed more advantageously, and are better adapted to fill up the picture with its proper shade or effect.—Such actors as are unacquainted with this art, I advise to study the works of the most eminent painters and sculptors.

MUSIC.

Without pretending to acquire a fundamental knowledge of the science of music, it is, nevertheless, necessary for an actor to study its elements, in order to be enabled to form a proper judgment as to the extent of his voice, to render every intonation easy and familiar, to avoid discordance, to regulate his sounds, to preserve and vary them at pleasure, and to impart to every accent, whether vehement or plaintive, that degree of modulation which is necessary.

Without this study, it is almost impossible to play Corneille to advantage. —He is either so sublime, or so familiar, that, unless the actor is perfectly

sure of his intonations, he runs the risk of appearing bombastical or trivial.

LANGUAGE, GEOGRAPHY, AND BELLES LETTRES.

The study of language is of more importance to an actor than any other. The theatre ought to be the school for foreigners, and of that part of the public who have neither time, nor the means of procuring proper masters, to learn the language of the country in its most perfect purity.

It is almost incredible, that persons who are selected to represent the *chef d'œuvres* of the most eminent writers of the nation should be unacquainted with the difference between a long and

a short syllable, or the distinction between the singular number and the plural; that they should confound the genders of nouns; that they should scarce know the masculine from the feminine; and that provincial accents should destroy the grandeur and purity of our language. Such, however, is the case with reference to the greater part of our actors. He who is unacquainted with the extent and value of words can never comprehend the meaning of things: if he should stumble upon it, it is only by chance; and I am at a loss to conceive how the public can tolerate those who appear before them with such defects, or who betray such unpardonable ignorance.

It is impossible to read history, with any advantage or improvement, without a knowledge of geography. The right of judging of the merits of such authors as write for the theatre imposes upon an actor the necessity of acquiring every species of knowledge which may enable him to judge with accuracy, and to determine, by a single perusal, the merits of a work which the author has been a year composing. An intimate acquaintance with stage-effect and the rules of the theatre, an accurate ear, a good taste, a sound, discriminating, and attentive judgment, are not all that is required: it is necessary to be acquainted with mythology, history, geography, and language; he must be acquainted with every de-

scription of poetry, and the writings of every dramatic author, ancient and modern. He will then be enabled to judge whether an author has made the most of his subject; he will perceive how much has been drawn from the times, places, and characters of which he has written; in short, whether the author has shown a creative fancy, is a servile imitator, or a plagiarist. The approbation of the critic is no ways flattering, nor his censure any disgrace, unless he is known to possess those qualities necessary to enable him to form his judgment with accuracy. It is not enough to approve or reject a work; the man who does either, ought to show himself capable of judging.—About two

years before my retirement from the theatre, there was a league among certain authors to pay no attention whatever to the judgment of actors. This attempt to invalidate the opinions of a class of men, without whom the authors could be of no use, was as unjust as the pretence for it was false and groundless.

Unless a superior power destroys the right of the actors, it is impossible that any of them should ever consent to such an injustice and degradation. Corneille, Voltaire, and Racine, demanded no other tribunal: their works, however, unlike those of the present day, did not require the illusions of the theatre, or the talents of the actors. It has been

said by authors, that the actors robbed them of the reward due to their exertions:—the trifling recompence they received was, they said, a proof of it. I can state, in reply to this observation, without the least fear of contradiction, that, with respect to the two and twenty years I have been upon the theatre, it is unfounded in truth.

The accounts prove, by the receipts and payments, that not only have the actors refrained from appropriating to themselves what was due to authors; but that, on the contrary, where they have themselves been unsuccessful, they have diminished their own salaries to augment the author's gains, and have not, unfrequently, bestowed their gratuitous assist-

ance in favour of several of them. The same accounts prove that Cinne, Iphigenie, and Mahomet, never produced their authors, so much as Venice Preserved, Zelmire, the Earl of Warwick, the Widow of Malabar, or even Varro.—It is unfortunately the case, in every state, that, where ignorance is most to be found, there also is the greatest portion of self-conceit.

I shall not intersperse, with the crude remarks I have attempted upon the dramatic art, any serious discussion relative to the Gallic church, or the arbitrary power under which more than ten thousand French actors and actresses at present labour. I undertook the profession at an age when one scarce is acquainted

with oneself. I have fulfilled the task allotted to me as well as I was able, without ever blushing at a profession which certainly has nothing in it degrading. The moment of my liberty appeared the sweetest I ever enjoyed in the course of my life. Restored to my rights as a citizen, I am content to deplore the lot of those who are still slaves. I keep myself quiet; and, while I turn the pages of Epictetus, console myself for all the misfortunes of nature and fate. But I cannot conceive how authors, who are obliged to court the favours of actors, who live among them, share their labours and their salaries, should join the popular cry, in order to insult those by whom they exist,

whom they know, and whom they ought to esteem.

Such a mode of conduct is the more extraordinary and reprehensible, as we daily perceive the light of reason surmounting prejudice. The profession of an actor is not attended with so many obstacles as it formerly was.

Moliere, to whom all Europe raised altars, was not deemed worthy to belong to the academy; yet, in our time, we read in its annals the simple name of Dubelley. The equality in point of situation, and the incalculable difference with respect to the merits of these two men, are the strongest proofs that can

be adduced of the revolution which has taken place in the public mind.

I admit that those authors who write for the theatre have often good reason to be dissatisfied with their judges. It is no less unjust to refuse actors of every description the right of judging, than it is to admit of their judgment indiscriminately. There are many whose abilities reach no higher than just to say, "*I have seen the sun*," without having the least idea of the system by which that glorious luminary is guided.

Without regard to ancient custom, the privilege of sex or situation, or the protection of power, which allow the most ignorant to have a voice as pre-

ponderating as the most enlightened, I would advise that a council of ten or twelve actors should be appointed, whose taste, judgment, and experience, should be universally known and admitted,—to whom I would have the power devolve of determining the merits or demerits of every theatrical work. The production of every author should be read in their presence; and they should have the power of giving their advice, making such corrections as they might think proper, or give their reasons for rejecting it altogether.

Anonymous criticisms, with regard to theatrical works, ought to be banished from the public eye.—He who has any fair, just, and candid remarks to make,

ought to make them openly. Whatever may be an author's vanity, he ought not to expect that the public should sacrifice its judgment and opinion to please or flatter it. It is not the author who is to judge whether his work deserves to interest the public, and increase the funds of the theatre; yet no author has any reason to complain of severity. The best part of the pieces which have been brought out within these fifteen years past sufficiently prove the scarcity of good authors, and the extreme indulgence of the public.

The simple and unqualified rejection or acceptation of an author's production leave no room for the exercise of his vanity: the former disgusts his feelings,

and he is seldom sensible of the latter. When the public at large are to pronounce, the possibility of discussion is precluded; but, in the limited council I have recommended, discussion will be an indispensable duty. By stating their reasons, they will impart hope and consolation to the author whose work they shall reject, and double the pleasure of him whose work they shall approve.

Such a theatrical council cannot be better described than by these verses of madame Pernelle:

On n'y respecte rien; chacun y parle haut,
Et c'est justement la cour du roi Petaut.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS.

WITH a very few exceptions, I have performed every tragedy which has been produced during the period I have been upon the stage.

As far as my abilities would allow, I have endeavoured to make myself perfectly acquainted with every character. I flatter myself I have acquired a perfect knowledge of the nature and spirit of them, and have enabled myself to pourtray them with their due effect. I may certainly be allowed to believe, after the encouragement I have experienced

from the public, that it will not disapprove of any actress who adopts the same line of study I have done, or pursues the instructions I lay down for her improvement. I cannot, however, prescribe rules for every particular character. The weakness which age has brought upon me, and the long continuation of my infirmities, do not allow me the means or leisure to attempt so arduous an undertaking. Besides, we often feel what we cannot express. An elevated and noble soul is inspired by sentiments of grandeur, refinement, delicacy, and sensibility, which are not to be described by language: they can only be delineated by a look, a gesture, the modulation of the countenance: these inexpressible movements of the soul may

be painted to the imagination, but cannot be expressed by words. I am, therefore, fearful of entering into minute details, which would be fatiguing to the reader, useless to those who possess genius, and dangerous to those without it. General observations, with a few particular remarks upon those characters which require peculiar study, shall be the only objects of my reflections.

I have already mentioned the four gifts of nature which are indispensable in an actor or actress — enunciation, strength, memory, and exterior or figure. From what I have said, the necessity of a regular system of study, an accurate judgment, and, if possible, a good natural genius, must be evident.—

The two former are adequate to the acquirement of the beaten track of characters; thelatter is requisite to enable the actor to undertake new ones.

I have spoken of the talents of dancing and music; have stated that it is necessary to add to them a knowledge of history, mythology, belles lettres, language, and geography: but without pretending that those who have not gone through a regular course of study should be acquainted with all I have enumerated,—alas! I but too well am convinced of the impossibility of it,—I will only remark what it is absolutely necessary to become, and what particular studies cannot be dispensed with.

Without a guide, or the advice of any one to point out to me how to direct my studies to advantage, I have often lavished my time and constitution in useless and unprofitable pursuits. It should, however, never be forgotten, that whoever wishes to attain celebrity in the dramatic art has not a single day to lose. I have numbered all mine by my labours, from twelve years of age to forty-two; and I am sensible, that even when I quitted the theatre, I had a multitude of faults to correct. What study does it not require, in order to be able to distinguish the difference between irony and disdain, between disdain and contempt, between warmth and passion, between impatience and rage, between timidity and fear, and between

fear and terror? What imperceptible shades of expression are to be resorted to, to distinguish between love, nature, and humanity? What efforts are requisite to paint the various gradations of rage, of terror, and of pity? What justness of feeling and expression of voice are necessary to reason in a manner at once simple and natural, without being cold and familiar?—This last is the most difficult of all:—to be natural, just, and noble, is the greatest possible proof of talent. My studies were calculated to enable me to arrive at the greatest possible perfection of the dramatic art; but the obstacles I have met with in my way, and the injustice which I experienced, forced me to abandon my career. I have only been

able to gather a few flowers; but the palm remains for whoever is bold enough to seize it. The only consolation that remains to me is, that I am enabled to point out the path by which it may be acquired.

The tragic actor should habituate himself off the stage to the tone and manner required at the theatre. Nothing is of so much importance as habit.

If I were to assume the manners of a Bourgeoise, during twenty hours of the day, I should still appear the same even when performing Agrippine, notwithstanding all my efforts to the contrary. The tones and gestures of low

life would continually escape me. My soul, bowed down by habits of submission and subordination, would be unequal to the expression of those sentiments of grandeur which distinguish the characters I represent.—Without losing sight of the station I fill in private life, I have ever made it my duty to maintain a degree of dignity and consequence consistent with the characters I filled in public. I am aware that this conduct on my part has exposed me to ridicule among my colleagues of the theatre, and among those who are too apt to form opinions without consideration. They allege that I have constantly the air of the Queen of Carthage. They think they distress me by such an observation: on the con-

trary, they do me the highest honour; they prove that I have succeeded in my endeavours. I have acquired thereby a greater degree of confidence; and am sensible that the labour which I have imposed upon myself, in public and in private, has enabled me to dispense with that continual agitation of mind by which I was, formerly, so extremely harrassed on the stage.

When any character is made the subject of criticism, and the person who criticises it, states the reasons upon which his judgment is founded, he is entitled to our acknowledgments and attention. Happy the actress who has merit sufficient to deserve such notice, and who possesses not the foolish pride and va-

nity to neglect it!—But it may be said, an actor is no-ways amenable to the public, except during the course of the representation; and, when it is over, that he then becomes himself part of the public.

Shall those who pursue a profession which requires education, a knowledge of the world, profound acquirements, elevation of soul, genius, and every gift of nature, be the objects of continual humiliation? Shall they in no respect be on an equality with the rest of the public? Shall they be compelled to make an humble sacrifice of superiority to every one?—The demand is unreasonable.

The disgrace which is attempted to be attached to the profession of the stage is a reflection upon the whole nation that suffers it.

What! shall the monarch who commands me to appear before him, the public who come to hear and applaud me, the author who submits his production to me, all have their rights and privileges, and yet I possess none?—I am obedient to the authority which is placed above me; I add new beauties to the characters entrusted to me; I enable the public to pass their hours agreeably; and I am rewarded by its contempt.—It is difficult to find a name for such inconsistency.

Are theatrical representations dangerous in their tendency?—If they are, suppress them—suffer them not to be so generally resorted to. If they are advantageous, let those who are employed in them enjoy that esteem which their talents and their conduct merit.

Wherein does the dishonour of such a profession consist?—The declaration of Lewis XIII. proves that a gentleman may assume it without degradation. The pieces we represent are subject to previous examination; we receive them from the hands of the person appointed to inspect them, and he is responsible for them. The statutes relating to the profession of the stage,

which have been promulgated by our kings, and confirmed by parliament, may be held out as a terror to us. They annul the parental authority, they elude the rights of matrimony, and declare children out of their minority at an age when restraint is most necessary. Revoke them!—they are no less repugnant to nature than to custom and reason; and he who would resort to them would be unworthy of consideration or pity. I have never heard of, or knew, any one, who appealed to such disgraceful statutes.

It is pretended that the manners are more dissolute on the stage than elsewhere..... It may be true that the stage allows of too great a freedom of man-

ners; but it is true also, that slander has exaggerated the evil.—Whatever may be the manners of the stage, let those who complain of them look to themselves, examine around them, and observe what is passing among their neighbours, and in their own houses; and, by observing the unrestrained disorders in their own families, learn to speak with less severity of others.—First destroy the barriers which deny actors to approach the altars—compel them not to a life of celibacy—suffer them to form alliances, without the risk of the object of their choice being disinherited; and then, if they give room for scandal, punish them, despise them: —I give my consent to it.

It is said that the money paid at the door for admittance is dishonourable to those who receive it. People say, "*These actors are paid for what they* "*do—I pay them—I am entitled to be* "*entertained for my money.*" Such are the phrases which have often excited my pity at the insolent brutes who uttered them. But is there a person so ignorant as not to know that no one will do any thing without being paid? Is there a profession or employment without a salary, fees, or profit?—I cannot support myself, obtain cloaths for my person, or a house to reside in, without giving my money in exchange. If I want any thing, I must pay for it: if I have a law-suit, I must fee the advocate and attorney: if I want

a physician, I must pay him. I have taken children to be baptised, and have paid the minister for performing the ceremony. I have lost my nearest relations, and have paid for the spiritual assistance they received, as well as for their interment. If I wish to hear mass, I pay ten, fifteen, or twenty sous, according to the church I go to. In short, every one knows the answer which Rousseau made to an Ambassador, who observed to him, that, "*What displeased him, with regard to "books, was, that they were composed "for the sake of making money by them.*" — "*Why,*" he replied, "*does your "Excellency deal in cyphers?*

Money is the idol of all who breathe;

—no one can deny this truth. Danger, falsehood, baseness, prostitution, guilt, all are resorted to in order to obtain it; and yet I am blamed for receiving, by a *voluntary* retribution, an equivalent for my expenses, and a fair remuneration for those labours, which are no less innocent than they are painful.—What is the consequence of such injustice? To intimidate persons of talent, and deprive the stage of their assistance.

A free agent, arrived at the age of reflection, would justly dread the almost insupportable fatigue of such a profession, the insufficiency of the salary, the continual dependence on the

arbitrary power of superiors, and the disgrace of national prejudice: but when deceived by youth and inexperience, any one has been induced to make choice of it, I know, by myself, to what a degree that disgust, which it may afterwards inspire, is detrimental to study, and to what a state of despair it has often reduced me. I have reckoned with horror the ten last years of my slavery: and, to the latest hour of my life, I ſhall bless even the injustice, the madness, and folly of that public, which has at length furnished me with the means of retiring.

The times of ignorance and hypocrisy are passed.—If talents are re-

quired on the stage, they must be obtained by recompensing them with a liberal remuneration.

An engagement at the theatre should not be the price of seduction or debauchery. Mere children, protected by persons in power, should not be admitted; the public alone ought to be the judge of talents, and the performers ought to be the judges of the pieces to be represented. Every thing would then go right; and, without it, all must be destroyed. But whether the situation of actors is ameliorated, or whether it is left as it is, still, if they desire to arrive at the perfection of their talent, they must attend to the system of study I have prescribed. Those

who deem it absurd in an actor to be necessarily and constantly occupied with those studies which the dignity and majesty of tragedy require, will be sure to appear, in common life, with an air of submiſſion and inferiority.

It is by departing from the principles I have laid down, that mademoiselle Dusmenil lost herself in the public estimation. The cause of the degradation of her talent was never generally known: I shall, therefore, I trust, be pardoned for describing the conversation I have had with that actress respecting the remarkable change in her manners, and for stating my own sentiments upon the subject.

PORTRAIT

OF

MADEMOISELLE DUMESNIL.

Mademoiselle Dumesnil was neither handsome, nor possessed of a good figure. Her physiognomy, her size, her appearance altogether, though without any natural defect, seemed characteristic of the manner of a Bourgeoise, without grace or elegance, and often on a level with those of the very lowest classes of the people. However, her neck was finely formed, and her eyes were expressive and commanding; and, when she pleased, were capable of inspiring sentiments of awe and respect.

Her voice, deficient in flexibility, was incapable of affecting the feelings; but

it was strong, sonorous, and, in every respect, adequate to the most violent bursts of passion.

Her pronunciation was pure: she had no impediment as to the volubility of her utterance.

Her action was often too violent for a woman; it had neither ease nor delicacy; but she was extremely sparing in its use.

Distinguished for her style of playing tender and pathetic characters, nothing could be more gratifying than her personification of the distress and despair of a mother. That expression of nature, which she displayed in such a cha-

racter, rendered her acting as near the sublime as can be conceived. The passions of love, ambition, or pride, were but faintly represented by her; but, as she was young, jealous of rivalship, and desirous of the reputation of a first-rate actress, great hopes were entertained of her emulation and future experience in her profession.—Such was mademoiselle Dumesnil when I first appeared upon the stage.

The system of study to which I had devoted myself, from the first moment of my appearance as an actress, by making me sensible of my own defects in a few years, taught me to discern those of others. I perceived that the object of mademoiselle Dumesnil was rather to

captivate a multitude, than please connoisseurs. A ranting manner, singular transitions, a mode of utterance more suited to comedy than tragedy, and a vulgar action, superseded those grand and impressive beauties of which she had before given such eminent proofs.

The ignorant exclaimed *Bravo! Nature!*—I, who admired great talents, even in a rival, could not avoid regretting the change I perceived; and I took the liberty of inquiring the cause.

"You was pursuing with such certainty the road of celebrity," said I, "that I cannot conceive how you have deviated from it. Sure of the esteem of the public, as well as of your own ap-

probation, what can you propose to yourself by such excentricities? Does the laugh you now excite appear more flattering to you than the admiration you formerly experienced? does it become you to confound Semiramis with the wife of Sganarelle? What can you mean by those forced tones at the end of every couplet? To what object are you sacrificing your understanding, your reason, and your talents?—Whatever may be the advantages you expect to derive from your new system, I assure you it afflicts me; and my frankness, upon the occasion, is a proof of it."

"I have listened to you," said she, "and I return you my thanks; your anxiety on my account appears disinter-

ested, and I shall answer you without reserve.

"You are aiming at a degree of perfection, at which you will never arrive; and which, if you should attain, no one would be sensible of. The number of persons, of real sound judgment, in a mixed assembly (should there even be any), may be about one or two; the remainder judge without examination, depending upon the opinions of others, or the reputation of the actress. Volubility, bursts of passion, and whatever is singular and uncommon, strike them; they are hurried away, and applaud with rapture;—let one person exclaim *Bravo!* and the rest repeat it immediately.

" Your deep and learned researches escape the multitude; the public are unaffected by them; and men of judgment, whose passions are, in general, repressed by age, wisdom, and experience, conceal their satisfaction without daring to manifest it. An audience, on leaving the theatre, mixes with the rest of the public, and imparts its enthusiasm.—Whence come you? What was the play? Who were the performers? —Mesdemoiselles Dumesnil and Clairon—the former was applauded to the ſkies, the latter appeared cold and formal.—It is thus our reputations, as actresses, are formed: and, depend upon it, if you continue the same course you have hitherto pursued,

I shall be exalted to heaven, and you will be left grovelling on earth."

"I am far," answered I, "from having attained the object I propose, but I already begin to perceive it:—the path is long and arduous, but I do not venture a step without the aid of study and reason. Who constantly searches after truth, must sooner or later arrive at it; while those who pursue a dazzling illusion are sure to be misled. The public is not so ignorant as you would have it believed: you seem to forget how often it forms an accurate judgment upon the works submitted to its decision. The finest thoughts, and most delicate sentiments, imme-

diately make an impression upon its feelings: even the galleries, which one would naturally suppose were composed of that part of the public least difficult to be pleased, will admit of no fault in violation, either in point of history, language, or the manners and consistency of the personages of the drama. The more I study these points, the more sanguine are my hopes that my studies will not be thrown away. You see that the public always attends to me, and often encourages me; and if you continue to have no other guide than folly, I flatter myself, that, when we are both weighed together, the balance will be the reverse of that which you have predicted."

From that moment I redoubled my researches, and mademoiselle Dumesnil pursued, unrestrained, the same line of conduct she had adopted. This actress, who might have been one of the first of her time.... My pen falls from my hand.

Without having recourse to any very minute observation, it is easy to perceive that each of the provinces that compose France are materially different from one another: though they have all the same national interest, and belong to the same empire, yet their prejudices and peculiar characters seem to make each of them a distinct nation.

If we observe the strangers who are to be met with in Paris, it is easy to perceive, in each of them, a characteristic feature, a national peculiarity, which distinguishes them. We may thence form a judgment as to the various shades of difference among the republics which composed the whole Grecian empire, and all of which were jealous of each other But there are only two in which the difference has any relation to tragedy—these are Athens and Sparta.

As I am far from being inclined to transcribe those authors who treat of the subject, I shall content myself with pointing out the oppositions which chiefly characterised those two nations,

—a subject which is extremely important to those who perform the female characters of tragedy.

Athens was the centre of the fine arts—of taste, magnificence, learning, eloquence, philosophy, and urbanity.

The young girls of distinguished families never appeared in public, except at festivals or religious ceremonies; a veil concealed their countenances; their nearest relations were the only men who dared approach and converse with them.—Such a system of education naturally produced artless and timid characters. An habit of circumspection and decency ought to be painted in their looks, their manners, the

ness of their voice, the simplicity of their expressions, the modesty of their appearance, and in the native dignity of their actions.

At Sparta, riches were useless—the expenses were in common; the children belonged to the state; the repasts were made in public, without distinction of rank, age, or sex; luxury was a crime; and the utmost austerity of manners prevailed*.

Young girls were habituated to violent exercises; they entered the lists

* I know this mode of education commenced with the laws of Lycurgus, but it is only at the period I am speaking of that a distinct character can be affixed to this part of Greece.

with the men, and contended with them for the prize of activity. Their dress was calculated to display their naked arms, legs, and even their thighs.

It must be evident such an education as this rendered the women robust and courageous, gave them a masculine voice, a bold look, an haughty appearance, and a confident assurance. Modesty,—that interesting and invaluable pledge of our sex, was equally esteemed in the two republics; but the mode of manifesting it could not be the same. I may be mistaken, but it certainly is from these two sources that I have derived the faculty of imparting to the characters of Monime and Hermione those distinguishing features which the

opposite nature of them necessarily demand.

CHARACTER OF MONIME.

The part of Monime, from the beginning to the end, is a prototype of an Athenian girl, such as I have described.

The actress, who, after the sentiments she expresses in the fourth act, thinks herself at liberty to give way to the least passion, either with respect to her voice, her countenance, or her action, certainly commits a most egregious error.

To reject the man chosen by her fa-

ther, as her husband, and in his presence too,—to dare to tell him,

. . . . . Ma main ni mon amour,
Ne seront point le prix d'un si cruel detour;

to brave that death she expects to receive; are proofs she is sensible of having outstepped the limits prescribed by modesty.

My first endeavour, in studying a part, is to give it that distinguishing feature which it requires, and to select some passage which is most striking, and places the character in the most prominent point of view. My chief pleasure is to propose to myself the greatest difficulties.—In the present character I discover them in these verses:

Non Seigneur *vainement* vous voulez m'etonner
Je vous connais, je fais tout ce que je m'apprête,
Et je vois *quels malheurs* j'assemble sur ma tête,
Mais le dessein est pris. *Rien* ne peut m'ebranler
Jugez en puisqu' ainsi je vous osé parler:
Et m'emporte au dela de cette modestie,
Dont jusqu'a ce moment je n'etais pas sortie, &c.

The softness of my voice, and the extreme modesty of my appearance, formed a contrast of the most striking nature with the emphatic manner in which I pronounced the words I have underlined, and the firmness depictured on my countenance.

The resolution of a woman who is acting under the impulse of passion may be doubted; but I think also there are very little expectations to be formed of an actress, who, while she is ma-

nifesting a determined resistance, has no appearance of her feelings being interested.

This is one of the most noble, yet tender characters, on the stage; but, I have too well experienced that it is one of the most difficult.

Without exclamation, passion, the power of voice to fill the whole theatre, a commanding manner, and a countenance capable of variety of expression, it is impossible to divest this character of that monotonous sameness which it presents at the first blush: by the aid of these, the actress derives the highest advantages; but they should be resorted to, and applied, with due

regard to the consistency of the character.

It is only after fifteen years study, as to the means of repressing my voice, my action, and my countenance, that I have been bold enough to assume a character so difficult; and I acknowledge, that to pourtray, from scene to scene, the grief and noble simplicity which distinguish it, required all the exertions of which I was capable, and all the desire to excel by which I was actuated. I, nevertheless, am far from flattering myself that I have arrived at that height of perfection in this character which is attainable. I have not played it often enough to correct my faults.

May some other actress do better than I have done! But I invite all those who undertake it, to weigh maturely what they may be allowed to attempt, and to act upon the impression, that Monime is absolutely out of the ordinary routine of characters.

HERMIONE.

The character of Hermione is among the number of those we must except from the general rule.

All the difficulties it presents would be removed, if this personage could be supposed to be thirty years of age. It would be then easy to describe, in all their various turns and gradations, the intrigue, the coquetry, the love, and the

vengeance, of which the character is susceptible: but Hermione is only supposed to be about twenty years old. At this age an actress may give a promise of what she will one day become; but I doubt whether it is possible for her to have acquired sufficient powers for such a character as this is.

The complicated, yet connected ideas, the profound reflections, the judgment which experience alone can give, rarely correspond with the grace, the timidity, the prejudices of education, the inexperience, the air, and the voice, of a girl of twenty years of age.

This character is so peculiar in its

nature, that the actress is in danger of either not attaining the perfection she aims at, or of exceeding it. It is an impassioned one, yet, in no respect, tender; it is furious, yet not wicked; it is noble and haughty, yet condescends to employ the arts of seduction and dissimulation with regard to Orestes, and the violence of atrocity with respect to Pyrrhus. Her pride and her passion go hand in hand, except in the passage, beginning

Mais Seigneur s'il le faut si le ciel en colère,

at the end of the soliloquy in the fifth act, where she only gives vent to the passion of love; and, from the force of her feelings, her eyes are suffused in tears.

Every resource which I was enabled to derive from my own talents and my reflections, in order to attain a perfect idea of the beauties of the character, and support its consistency, but the more convinced me how arduous it was. Happy should I be, could I abridge the study of others, by giving an exact, clear, and methodical account of my own!—but I have already said, that there are things which cannot be written? Without the aid of my intonations and countenance, it is out of my power to give an idea of the shades by which the character and age of Hermione are distinguished. It is the province of genius, study, and judgment, to profit by the weak and

inadequate instructions I shall lay down.

In the parts where the actress is to describe the love of Hermione, she must carefully avoid that expression of voice, and simplicity of countenance, which characterise tender souls; and, in pourtraying the impassioned scene, she must equally avoid that confident and assuming disdain of an experienced woman; such, for example, as Roxane in Bajazet. In this last character, any thing is allowable within due bounds. The actress must seek within herself whatever may exalt the heroine in a woman of twenty, as well as impart that degree of mildness which even a

heroine of that age ought not to be supposed divested of.

That couplet in the fourth act, which the public, men of letters, and actors, call the *couplet of irony*, ought not, in my opinion, to have that appellation. Irony demands a lightness of mind, a tranquillity of soul, which, certainly, Hermione does not possess: her pride and her love, equally wounded, afford only access to a sentiment of rage, which the haughtiness of her character in vain endeavours to repress.

A countenance, in which indignity and nobleness of soul are equally painted; a voice stifled in its first attempt at expression by rage and fury; and pas-

sions which overcome her, and she is unable to retain, can only produce an image of the most bitter sarcasm. The horror which she herself experiences, in reminding Pyrrhus of the cruelties of which he has been guilty, can never have the semblance of irony.

Hermione may infuse into her reproaches all that disdain and contempt which is calculated to render them more insulting; but she neither can, nor ought, to descend to irony.

THEATRICAL SCHOOLS.

Since my retreat from the theatre, I have continually been hearing of the necessity of having dramatic schools.—The public think them practicable, and

likely to be advantageous; and considerable sums have been raised for their establishment. Nothing more clearly proves that the managers of theatrical representations have not the least idea of what constitutes a great actress. We learn to dance and sing as perfectly as possible, because these two talents have regular rules and principles, which the most ignorant may understand and practise; but I know of no rules, of no principles, which can teach people every species of knowledge, every species of acquirement, necessary to produce a great actress; I know of no rules which can teach us to think and to feel: nature alone can bestow those faculties, which experience, study, and opportunities, after-

wards develope. The only schools from which there is a reasonable and probable expectation of advantage, are the provincial theatres. The necessity of obtaining an engagement, the emulation of excelling each other, the dread of public disapprobation, the practice which the memory obtains by a continuance of labour, the ease and familiarity acquired by a daily appearance upon the stage, the facility of thereby acquiring a good ear, and of enlarging one's ideas by seeing entire pieces performed, and by observing their effect upon the public, will achieve more in six months towards the formation of a good actress, than two years instruction in private, whatever may be the talents and ability of the

master. I do not think I am actuated by any very great degree of vanity in comparing myself with the actresses of the present day: they will, I trust, pardon me for asserting, that I do not believe them better instructed, superior in ability, or more serviceable on the stage than I was. I have spared no pains in forming the talents of mesdemoiselles Dubois and Rancourt. I appeal to all who have seen them—my charming scholars have evinced the greatest abilities: but, alas! notwithstanding all my cares, added to what they received from nature, I have never been able to make any thing more of them than mere imitators of myself. The utmost hopes were formed from their first appearance; but it was be-

cause I was behind the curtain, and the public was captivated by youth and beauty. When I ceased my lessons, their talents vanished.

It is nature alone that can form splendid characters in any walk of life. Observe the state of mankind with respect to the arts, siences, and learned acquirements; and from the small number of those who may be said to excel, you will be able to determine how impossible it is to command genius, or to impart it by instruction.

When a young actress discovers spirit, an accurate judgment, sensibility, force, a good voice, memory, and a countenance happily formed for the

characters she is to represent, let her not want the means to improve them; provide her with such masters as may be necessary to enable her to develope her ideas; let her not languish in a state which may repress the energy of her mind, and retard her progress; let her not feel the necessity of resorting to vice to obtain the situation she is emulous of; recommend to her to listen with attention to the advice which the public, or others of the same profession with herself, may give, as to her evincing too much or too little warmth of feeling, dignity of action, or grace of deportment: let her second the efforts of her friends to forward her improvement. Such, according to my opinion, are the only possible means by which an actress

can derive advantage from instruction. Is it to be supposed that Preville can instruct others to perform Orosmane and Semiramis? that Molè can create actors fit for all characters? It is an absurdity, at which they themselves must laugh in their sleeves. To give themselves airs of importance, form a seraglio among the female candidates for theatrical fame, amass money, and become the terror of the whole stage, are all these gentlemen pretend to, or can perform.

I shall be answered, perhaps, that the provincial theatres do not furnish good subjects. I agree that comic opera and the ballet absorb every thing else; and that, at present, performers in that line

are the most essential part of the theatrical company. The talents required for such situations are in the reach of every one, whatever may be their educations; and those who have acquired them may, at any time, make sure of gaining a livelihood; their dresses are furnished by the managers, and their salaries are, generally, liberal.

But the talents for the French theatre demand an education of a peculiar nature, and comprehending a variety of branches; they also imply the possession of many gifts of nature, and that the actress should be of an age competent to understand, feel, and compare what she studies; the dresses are extremely expensive, and are entirely pro-

vided by the actress herself; the salary is small at first, and is never increased to what may be termed a sufficiency, until after a lapse of several years, and then, perhaps, not without that protection which, in many instances, is not to be obtained without concessions, far from being congenial to the feelings and dispositions of every one.

Those who make the stage their profession are for the most part in necessitous circumstances, and of indigent families. It is a natural choice for persons so situated, inasmuch as it is one which, of all others, presents itself as affording the fairest encouragement for talent, and the surest prospect of immediate emolument.

It was not till after twenty years labour that the pension of the king, amounting to an hundred pistoles, was granted me; and I have seen mesdemoiselles Allard and Guimard, from the first moment of their appearance at the opera, receive pensions of 1200 livres from the king. After twenty-two years services, the only recompense I have had, to enable me to retire, is 1000 livres; and mademoiselle Heinel, at the end of fourteen years, retired with a pension of 8000 francs. These ladies had great talents I admit; but, I dare trust, that many of my comrades on the stage, as well as myself, may justly pretend to an equality with them. These examples are a sufficient reason why there are more good dancers than actresses.

The theatres des Boulevards have also greatly accelerated the degradation of talents. The number of young girls who are brought forward at this theatre, and at the most tender years, are ruined in their constitutions by exertions beyond their strength; and (if I may believe what is said), by a degree of misconduct which exhausts them, and brings on a premature old age. The low and obscene pieces represented on theatres of this kind necessarily banish that noble dignity and decency of deportment which is required at the French theatre.—They merely represent farces; and the public require from them a different mode of expression, and a different style altogether, to what they expect on the French stage: a

proof has lately been furnished which is unanswerable. There is a performer belonging to these bastard-kind of dramatic representations, of the name of Volange,—I am not acquainted with him; but all Paris agree he possesses the perfection of talent at the *variétés amusantes*. He made his début at the Italian theatre, where neither the works which are represented, nor the talents of the performers, bear the least comparison with those of the French theatre; yet, even there, this *Volange*, who had been deemed so famous in his line, was infinitely below the very worst of the actors. These spectacles not only fail in improving a performer, but, on the contrary, they vitiate their taste, corrupt their manners, and spoil

those who, perhaps, by the study of the *chef d'œuvres* of our theatre would have arrived at celebrity.

The number of those destined to appear in public is circumscribed, as in every other situation of life; and the facility of procuring an engagement at these minor theatres is a resource to those who are deterred by the difficulty of appearing upon a superior stage, and whose talents deserve public support, if only from a principal of national vanity.

It does not become me to condemn the taste of the public for these spectacles, or to blame the magistrates who tolerate and are daily increasing them,

in violation of their own duty and the rights of the regular theatres; but I may be allowed to assert, that, as long as they are suffered to remain, no dramatic school will ever be able to produce that proud and eminent display of talent which was formerly so much admired on the national stage. The French theatre has but four performers worthy of being mentioned*, the Italian has but two†. The opera may be said to consist wholly of dancers. How is it so great a falling off has not suggested the means of remedying the evil? How is it that *Moliere*, *Corneille*, *Racine*, and *Voltaire*, have been aban-

* Préville, Molè, Brisard, Larive.

† Clerval, and Madame Dugarzon. Caillot has lately retired,

doned for the family of *Pointus?* The surest means of annihilating merit is to protect mediocrity.

OROSMANE.

I have always been astonished that Le Kain, who is so superior in the character of Orosmane, should give cause to expect something more from him in the first couplet of the first act.—He expresses himself well; yet I do not find any thing of that amenity and tenderness of passion, so eloquently depictured by Zaïre. Orosmane, surrounded by the different orders of the slaves of his seraglio, and who, in his interview with his mistress, has prepared himself with a studied speech, appears to me in the light of an im-

perious master rather than of that tender lover one would be led to expect. I have read this couplet over and over again, with the most scrupulous attention; I have endeavoured to discover in the verses that sentiment and passion which is supposed to be concealed beneath the declamation of the first thirty-two verses; but I have found only an inconsistency and contradiction between the language and the meaning of the character. It is with a degree of impatience I hear Orosmane talking of business, when, in my opinion, he ought to have been speaking of love. In the course of my researches I discovered a kind of mute scene, which it may not be uninteresting to notice.

Orosmane enters surrounded with all that grandeur and theatrical pageantry which the character requires. I wished to observe in him that departure from his dignity which his youth and sensibility would have justified; that his eyes should have sought those of Zaïre, and that he should have recogniſed her by the lovely suffusion of her countenance, and the tumultous heavings of her bosom; that he should immediately have observed the object of whom he is enamoured; that by the exertion of a noble, yet tender sentiment, he should select her from among the train; that he should approach his mistress, seize her hand, and, with looks of love and an emotion of tenderness, he should press it within his, and, at the same time, in-

struct her as to the means of rendering him completely happy. This scene, performed with dignity and expression, would give additional effect to the ideas of the author, importance to the characters, and impart a degree of pleasure and satisfaction to every spectator, whose soul was inspired by tenderness and sensibility.

STUDY OF PAULINE IN POLIEUCTE.

Pauline is one of those characters of which there are no models to be found in nature: at least, I have in vain endeavoured to discover one similar to it in the world, and in history.

The violent passion of love, and that disgust which often succeeds it, are to

be daily met with in the common occurrences of life; but an unfeigned love for two distinct objects existing at the same time, avowed to each of the two men who inspire it, and justified by respect, esteem, and confidence of both, is a thing unheard of in nature, and extremely difficult to pourtray with justness and accuracy to the eyes of the multitude.

After having profoundly studied this character, and convinced myself that the spectators, aided by the first impression of the scene, would readily, and with facility, prepare themselves for that catastrophe which every line introduces, I determined within myself, as far as lay in my power, to unite to such

advantages as I derived from my own person, the nobleness, the mildness, the firmness, and the freedom of the character I was to represent.

I exerted myself to the utmost of my ability, to give to the inflexions of my voice, and the movements of my countenance, that touching and expressive simplicity which characterises a pure and sensible soul.

Mistress of my physiognomy and accents, this study was no ways difficult; but by what means was I to avoid a sameness and monotony in expressing these two co-existing passions?—how was I to pourtray their different shades, without altering the simplicity of the

characters?—how avoid an appearance of infidelity with regard to one of the objects of my love, and of indelicacy with regard to the other?—It seemed to me impossible to seize the true criterion.

The first passion, arising solely from the impressions of the soul, increased by the charm of a real inclination, nourished by esteem, fear, and regret, necessarily requires a tint of delicacy and sensibility different from the other. The order of a father, the most absolute resignation to every virtuous action, even the illusion of the senses, cannot keep pace with her profound sense of what is just, and suitable to her dignity: on the contrary, they oblige her to sacrifice her rights to her duty. The character,

however, as far as it goes, is certainly one of the most tender, as well as one of the most energetic, ever drawn. I imagined that a different manner of giving vent to my tears might produce that nice shade of colouring which I sought. Those which I shed for Sévère seemed to derive their source from the bottom of my soul, and flowed abundantly down my face; while those which I shed for Polieucte appeared to escape from my eyes, sometimes urged by humanity, sometimes by impatience.

The effect which tears flowing from two such different sources must indispensably have upon the voice, the motions of the body, and the expres-

sion of the countenance, may be easily imagined: but, in order to attain the proper point of perfection, and not to exceed it, an actress must have these four verses continually in her remembrance:

Je donnai par devoir à son affection,
Tout ce que l'autre avait par inclination;
Et quoique le dehors soit sans èmotion,
Le dedans n'est que trouble et que sédition.

OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
CHARACTER OF ROXANE IN BAJAZET.

Roxane is one of those wretched beauties, condemned, by the misery and the humiliating state in which she is placed, to wish for slavery, as the only means of arriving at happiness.

Those slaves who are destined to the pleasure of a master, not the choice of their heart, and whom their inclinations revolt at—who are either ignorant or regardless of what is due to the feelings of modesty and decency—who are watched and confined in the seraglio, by beings whom they cannot contemplate without horror—constantly trembling under the most arbitrary despotism—humbled by remaining too long among the crowd of slaves, or dreading the disgust of their master, by which they may be again placed there; —is it possible that, so situated, they can be susceptible of a tender, free, and unfeigned passion? can they form an idea of real love?—I think it impossible.

The vanity of triumphing over their rivals; the ambition of arriving at the supreme height of power; the necessity of intriguing, in order to maintain it; and of amassing treasure, in order to command support, are the principles by which they are actuated; the gratification of the senses are the only sentiments which influence them, the only passions of which they have the least idea. The woman who is constrained to live under an eternal despotism is compelled to contract habits of fear, dissimulation, and even of falsehood; and whatever depresses and bows down the soul, naturally tends to prepare it for the impressions of ferociousness, rather than of tenderness.

The character of Roxane is precisely upon this model; she is continually ungrateful, haughty, cruel, and ambitious.

When the passion of love has preceded vicious habits, though it is incapable of inspiring sentiments of remorse or humanity, yet it may, nevertheless, exist for some time; but I do not think love can possibly take root in a heart already vitiated. The intrigues of the Visier, and the hopes of arriving at that rank which Amurath had refused her, are the only motives which determine her to see Bajazet.

The sight of a man who is younger, more handsome, and who interests her

more than her master and benefactor, excites a degree of ferment in her soul which she mistakes for love; but all that she does, and all that she says, only prove her actuated by a voluptuous and momentary illusion.

Her vanity wounded, her ambition disappointed, are the only sources of her tears. The idea of her grandeur employs all the faculties of her soul.

Menace is constantly in her mouth;—it is with premeditation she prepares the death of Bajazet;—she proposes to be the actor and witness of the assassination of Atalide, as if it was a just deed;—without the least struggle with herself, without the least remorse, she

abandons her lover to the mutes who are at her devotion;—it is with the most revolting arrogance she heaves at her feet the niece of the emperor, and dares to say to her,

Loin de vous separer je pretends aujourd'hui
Par des nœuds éternels vous unir avec lui,
Vous jouirez bientot de son aimable vue, &c.

Weigh well these words; consider that Bajazet is at the time no more; and then judge whether the heart that is atrocious enough to utter them with tranquillity can be susceptible of love. I think she prefers Bajazet to Amurath; but an impulse of desire is not a sentiment of love—the irritating allurements of the senses, and the tender inclinations of the soul, are diametrically opposite to each other.

Let the actress who performs this character avoid all expression of tenderness and delicacy. An air of desire, repressed by the most rigorous attention to decorum, is the only mark of sensibility her eyes ought to express. In those parts where she commands or menaces, her voice should seem lofty and despotic, as if she was consious she was only surrounded by vile and trembling slaves.—In preserving throughout her whole deportment that noble air which the stage requires, and which every one, whatever may be her general talents, may possess, introduce, at times, that kind of masculine dignity of which the world furnishes so many examples. In short, while the actress, during three-fourths of the character, depictures the

manners of a cruel sovereign, and one born to the throne, let her in the other part be recognised as the insolent slave, abusing that momentary power for which she is only indebted to her beauty.

UPON THE TRAGEDIES OF MANLIUS, AND VENISE SAUVEE.

There is no character on the stage in which profound study can be dispensed with. The more resemblance there is between such and such characters, or such and such actions, the greater is the necessity of describing those shades by which they are distinguished. We have for example the same subject in Manlius and Venise Sauvèe; the names, the language, the action, the person-

ages, and the interests of the characters, are the same. But in Manlius the scene lies at Rome, in the 371st year from its foundation; and in the other at Venice, in the 1618th year of our æra.—Discover, by the assistance of history, the manners of the two different places, and the spirit of the times; reflect upon the personages, and what more or less dignity of character they possessed; conform all your ideas to the general opinion of the people of the times:—you will then feel that it is impossible to have the same tone of voice, the same deportment, or the same spirit and style of acting, in the one as in the other.

UPON CORNELIE, IN THE DEATH OF POMPEY.

The public opinion has ever deemed the character of Cornelie one of the finest on the stage.—Having to perform this character, I studied it with all the attention of which I was capable. No one has ever succeeded me in it. The modulation which I wished to establish, with reference to the historical character, was not altogether congenial to the theatrical one; in as much as the former appeared to me noble, simple, and expressive; the latter, masculine, declamatory, and cold. I guarded against the idea that the public and Corneille were both wrong. My vanity did not extend to that point; but, in order to compromise the matter, I determined

to be silent, and never to perform Cornelie. Since my retreat, the *Commentaries upon Corneille*, and the word *esprit*, in *Les Questions Encyclopediques*, by Voltaire, have been published. Read them:—if I am deceived, the example of so great a man will console me!

PHEDRE.

The character of Phédre is one of the finest on the stage. There is no one that is better written, and, consequently, no one more easy to learn and retain.

It requires no study of a local nature, no research into the manners of a particular time or place. Phédre is

a woman who is the slave of her unrestrained passions; and such a character is the same in every country. She has betrayed her sister: she is a wife, a mother, and a queen. It is easy to impart to her age and experience that tone of voice and deportment which are just, natural, and requisite. Every one endowed with sensibility, every impetuous character, may easily find within her own breast, or by an attention to what passes daily before her eyes, the means of describing a violent passion. Racine has marked, from act to act, the gradations to be observed in that of Phédre. Follow the author exactly; endeavour to attain his meaning; but avoid pretending to suppress it. All that is required of you, when

you have arrived at a perfect knowledge of your author, is a countenance capable of variety, of expression, a commanding voice, but at the same time calculated to excite emotions of tenderness.

Phédre is torn by remorse;—it is a remorse, real and uninterrupted, throughout the whole play. The acknowledgment of her passion in the first act, the reasons by which she justifies it, and her death in the fifth, are proofs of what I assert. Her virtue would, doubtless, have surmounted her passion, if that passion had produced only the usual errors of the senses, and of the imagination: but the unhappy Phédre yields to the power of Venus;

a superior force hurries her continually on to act and to say what her virtue condemns. Throughout the whole of her character, this struggle should be present to the eyes and imagination of the spectator. I would advise, for the expression of remorse, a simple diction, noble yet tender accents, a profusion of tears, a countenance deeply affected; and, for the expression of love, a sort of delirium and insensibility, similar to that of a somnambulist, who preserves, in the arms of sleep, the remembrance of the fire which consumed him when waking.—I took this idea from the following verses,

Dieux ! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts !
Quand pourrai-je à travers d'une noble poussière
Suivre de l'œil un char fuyant dans la carrière ?

.....Insensée! Ou suis-je, et qu'ai-je dit?
Ou laissai-je egarer mes vœux et mon esprit?
Je l'ai perdu—les dieux m'ont ravi l'usage, &c.

In the scene, in the second act, with Hyppolite, I would recite the first couplet in a low and trembling voice, and without daring to raise my eyes. At the moment the sound of his voice struck my ear, my whole person should evince that pleasing trepidation, which souls of real sensibility experience, by reflecting on the past.

The second couplet should be expressed by a different emotion. My words should appear to be interrupted by the violent palpitation of my heart, and not by fear.

In the third, my eyes, enflamed by love, and, at the same time, repressed by virtue, should manifest the conflict in my soul.

In the fourth, this conflict is more violent; but love triumphs.

In the fifth it reigns predominant; and I then assume a deportment expressive of dignity and propriety.

The delirium of the second act is produced by the conflict of contending passions; that of the fourth act by despair and terror. In the first be attentive that the whole countenance, the voice, and the action, may be engaging, tender, and caressing. Preserve the vehemence of passion for the other.

The couplet which terminates this scene has always embarrassed me: none of my attempts have satisfied me. Whether it is, that sixty empassioned verses, which scarce allow time to take breath, are beyond the powers of human nature; whether it is, that, admirable as these verses are, the conflict they describe is, in fact, too long; whether it is beyond my capacity to pourtray such a picture of love and remorse, with that just shade and colouring which should display those passions in a prominent point of view at the same time; yet, so the fact is, I have always found insurmountable difficulties in this passage; and I am obliged to confess that, in speaking and acting it to the very utmost of my power, I have always been

far inferior to the author's ideas, as well as my own. But to form conceptions while reading a work, and to express those conceptions by action, are two very different things.

There are various other remarks which might be made upon this character. I have confused ideas of many important things that might be pointed out; but I dare not trust to my memory, which has not distinctly preserved the first impressions it received. I am no longer adequate to the fatigue of any very profound researches, and I am apprehensive of betraying myself into errors by entering into details of which I have but an imperfect recollection.

BLANCHE,

IN BLANCHE AND GUISCARD.

I know no character which is more agreeable to perform than that of Blanche. It requires no great deal of previous study, either as to time, place, or its appropriate dignity. A passion which has taken its birth in the security of infancy, increased by simplicity of soul, and habitual confidence; a sentiment of respect and obedience due to the author of her days; a mind formed to the purest dictates of nature, render this character so simple and easy, that it is impossible for any actress, who possesses the principles of her profession, and has a tolerable capacity, to fail playing it well.

All the great personages of antiquity impose upon us the duty of forgetting ourselves. It is only by the greatest efforts, by the most profound studies, that we can attain the faculty of depicturing those different passions, which, all proceeding from the same point, are continually reverting to it, and therefore require a constant variety in the inflexions of the voice, the expression of the countenance, and the deportment of the person. At the same time that it is an indispensable duty to preserve, unaltered, the consistency of the character,—such, for example, as is required to express the passion, the virtue, the jealousy, and the remorse of Phédre,—there are, in particular, four expressions of shame, all of which de-

mand different shades. In the first act, when she entrusts the secret of her love to Œnone: in the second, when she has been too explicit with Hyppolite: in the third, when she appears before her husband, and in the presence of the youth who is insensible to her love, and who disdains her: in the fourth, when she reflects upon the nature of her crime, and expresses the dread she is under, that when her soul leaves this world she will be forced to acknowledge it. All these require different tints or shades to express them: the countenance, the speech, must be different. The first must describe a virtuous woman, who would die rather than fail in her duty, and who yields not, but through the last extremity: the

second should paint her under the dominion of her passion, and anxious how the object of her love will encourage it: the third needs no other expression than that of embarrassment and remorse. Though she has said to Œnone, "*Fais ce qui tu voudras*,"—"*Act with me as you think proper*;" yet we must not suppose she was sensible of the importance of this consent; she would no longer be the same character. It must never be lost sight of, that she is virtuous from principle, and only criminal by the will of the gods. Her shame, in the fourth act, proves it; and that shame ought to express, in the most vehement and empassioned manner, her terror, her remorse, and her virtue.—What a task for an actress!

I dare affirm that it is beyond human powers to surmount the difficulties this character presents in every verse. Whatever have been my efforts, my meditations, my researches, all I can flatter myself with is, that, *perhaps*, I have a *few less faults* than others. In playing Blanche, I always thought myself in my own chamber. My physiognomy, my inflexions, united, without art or study, to the sensibility of my soul. By nature tender and generous, I was susceptible of all the fears, the suspicions, and disappointments of love. When I played Blanche, I was always myself. It is the only character which never cost me any toilsome study. But if she who performs it does not adhere to the purity of nature,—if love is not

the only sentiment of her heart, she will have many difficulties to overcome. Talents which are not beyond mediocrity seek resource in sudden exclamations, violence of gesture, and unusual modes of expression: this must be avoided in giving effect to the softer passions. By recurring to art, we may be able to attain the faculty of pourtraying the more violent passions and sentiments; but art can never teach an actress how to simplify a character. It is nature alone to whom we must resort, in order to paint the delicate shades which distinguish candour and artless innocence, the light tints which pourtray the early sensations of pure and uncorrupted youth, and the striking and noble simplicity which emanate

from a soul undebased by the ruder passions. Art can only depicture what is grand. If you repress the bold efforts of its pencil,—if you weaken its colouring, you leave merely a representation of simple and unsophisticated nature.

M. Saurin, the author of Blanche, Spartacus, *Les Mœurs de Beverley*, and many other interesting works, was a man eminent by the wisdom and judgment displayed in his writings. His manners were pure, his style pleasing, lively and correct; and his conduct and probity rendered him dear to his friends, and the admiration of the public. It is with a remembrance, no less delightful to my soul than flattering to my

vanity, that I recall the charms of his society, and the friendship with which he honoured me.

The four principal characters in Blanche were represented by Le Kain, Molè, Brisard, and myself. The habitual kindness of the public, our efforts to merit it, and the interest of the piece itself, left us no room to doubt of success. We particularly depended on the applause and admiration of the female part of the audience. Those pure and tender passions, the result of an education proportioned to female delicacy, strengthened by the duties they owed as wives and mothers, appeared to us reasons which rendered our success certain. Our expectations were

deceived—the women abandoned us—the youthful part of the audience followed their example; we had only the support of a few men, divested of prejudice, and wearied of the tumult of the world. Notwithstanding the merit of the author, and our own talents, the success of the piece was but indifferent. The desire of discovering new lights, which might improve my talents, and my habit of endeavouring to find a reason for every thing, induced me to explore the causes of a failure which I was at a loss to account for. The result of my inquiry was, that real love, affection, and genuine purity of manners, were antiquated chimeras, whose very names were a satire upon our modern manners.

OBSERVATIONS

UPON M. DE LA TOUCHE, AND HIS TRAGEDY OF IPHIGENIE IN TAURIS.

M. Guymond de la Touche, author of Iphigénie in Tauris, was my intimate friend. Never can I think of his loss without the most painful regret: but whatever violence I may do my own feelings, I am impelled to make some observations upon his tragedy; and, by giving some account of the author, interest those who admire him, and inform those who have criticised his work.

Born of parents who were distinguished for their piety, M. de la Touche

entered into the society of the Jesuits at the age of fourteen. Penetrated with the desire of practising his religion, and of instructing himself in whatever was connected with it, and might enable him to support its doctrines, he determined within himself never to leave the convent, but to lead a solitary life, and devote all his hours to the study of theology and history. After fourteen years application, he confessed that his doubts daily increased. He became disgusted with his situation, and quitted it.

Absorbed by the importance of his reflections, removed far from every object of temptation, his senses enjoyed the most happy tranquillity. He had

no idea of the world into which he had entered. — Our manners and customs equally astonished and intimidated him; and the embarrassment of his deportment in his new situation, his reserve, fear, and modesty, to which he had habituated himself, induced those who did not know him to believe that he was a man of moderate talents; but his scrupulous probity, his frankness and artless manners, the simplicity of his expressions, and the profundity of his knowledge, distinguished him in the eyes of those who were acquainted with him, and had obtained his confidence, as one of the most interesting characters. The first moments of his liberty were devoted to the public spectacles; in praise of which he was continually

hearing every one speak, without annexing any determinate idea as to the effect of them. He was passionately fond of tragedy. My acting pleased him. He composed his Iphigénie with incredible rapidity. The marchioness de Graffigny, at whose house he lived, brought me first acquainted with the author and his work. The modesty of M. de la Touche, his aversion to encomium, and the docility with which he adopted the corrections of others, formed a contrast to authors in general, which was perfectly new to me.

I offered his play to the performers, who, surprised at finding so many beauties in a first composition, received it without making the slightest correction.

However, on the day when we were to represent it for the first time, we discovered, in the course of the previous rehearsal, so many defects in the fifth act, that we desired the author to alter the catastrophe, as well as one or two hundred verses, assuring him that we would not separate till we had learnt the whole of the alterations he should make. He was near an hour; the act was entirely altered by the author, and studied by the performers. The curtain rose at half after five, and the piece was received with the most unbounded applause.—Such an effort certainly demanded all the zeal, memory, and capacity of the performers; but what must have been the merit of that man who could arrange a plot, and compose two hundred

new verses in the course of two hours, surrounded, at the same time, by twenty persons to whom he was dictating, and possessing no knowledge of the theatre, or of the public who was to judge of his production? My reason instructed me to distrust my own weak judgment, and the enthusiasm with which friendship inspired me; but, without determining on what M. de la Touche would one day prove, I thought myself justified in believing that the study of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, had classed his ideas, formed his style, developed that genius he had derived from nature, and that he merited to be reckoned the next in order after those three great men.

His death, as sudden as it was extra-

ordinary, has deprived us of the second tragedy on which he was employed. He entrusted the subject of it to me; but, diffident of himself, and desirous of knowing the extent of his talent, he determined not to communicate his work to any of his friends till it should be entirely finished, and then to submit it to their approbation and criticism; and, according as they should determine, either to pursue or quit the career he had entered upon. This work, it is supposed, he destroyed; at least, it has never been discovered. Iphigénie is all that remains of his genius. It is a task I have imposed upon myself to guide my companions on the stage, to a thorough knowledge of those characters which I have performed. The one I

am now speaking of presents subjects worthy of remark, from the first to the last verse. To understand the author, and perfectly comprehend the character, it is necessary to read and study the work with attention, from beginning to end. I must observe, that the unity of the play gives it an appearance of monotonous insipidity, unless the actress, by the varied expression of her countenance, and the appropriate flexibility of her voice, renders it gradually animated and interesting.—Form a just estimate of your powers and resources; manage them with address; evince capacity in the proper distribution of them, and, without remitting your ardour, make them conduct you to the attainment of that perfection which is your object.

Above all things, vary the two different degrees of sorrow which you have to express. Those which flow from the long continuance of your misfortunes ought to be expressed in all the vehemence and bitterness of woe: those which are a tribute to humanity, ought to be tranquil and unempassioned.

When the captives are released from their chains, in the second act, advance from the bottom of the theatre till you come even with Pylades, who is nearest you; then stop and survey him with a noble and compassionate air; but in such a manner as not to seem to reproach his misfortune; then proceed onward, and observe Orestes. I may be allowed to assert, that you will not be able to con-

template him without being sensible of a certain degree of trouble and surprise. Take time to survey him; do not let your eyes quit him; but, with a low and agitated voice, pronounce, *Quels traits et quel maintien!* . . . .

In the same scene, when you are interrogating Orestes, and Pylades is eager to answer for him, observe the latter with an air of superiority, mingled with mildness, and, by a sign at once dignified and graceful, desire him to be silent and to retire.

Let all your questions respecting your family be made with the greatest simplicity.

Let only so much of your joy and grief be observable, as the force of nature betrays in spite of your efforts to the contrary. The greater your exertions are to conceal your tears, the more impressive should be their effect when they do flow. Those seeming trifles are of the utmost importance. I never allowed myself to neglect a single action or word that could possibly be serviceable to the scene. An actress cannot, by every word she utters, produce a striking and sensible effect; but she ought not to use one word without conveying some sort of impression. In the course of the piece, Iphigénie appears as a mild, sensible, and humane character: notwithstanding the excess of her misfortunes, she

does not give way to vehement and empassioned complaints,—only in the fifth act, when she says,

Mais de quel droit ici me commande ta rage ?

and in the rest of the scene she must unite all the haughtiness of high birth, all the authoritative dignity she derives from the knowledge of a sacred mystery, and all that confidence and courage which are ever inspired by virtue.

I requested that no other than myself should be allowed to act this character while I remained at the theatre. The sentiments of friendship, by which I was actuated, made me apprehensive of the indispensable errors of inexperience. I never played it myself with-

out having recourse to new researches. The desire of being deemed to possess great talents made me more uneasy with regard to this character than any other. Since my retreat, I have witnessed its performance by two different actresses. The one was dignified, noble, and beautiful, but was far from possessing that degree of sensibility which I required: the other was handsome, but without any distinguishing characteristic; she displeased me by the distortions of her features, and still more by the indecency of her action and the low familiarity of her utterance; yet did this actress derive from nature a voice capable of conveying the tenderest impression, and of commanding the tear of sensibility.

I was persuaded that none went to a tragedy, but for the purpose of raising their imaginations beyond the ordinary pitch of human nature, and, from the personages of antiquity, to receive lessons of nobleness, decency, courage, and grandeur of soul. How inadequate must be the impression, when an actress represents the manners of a simple *Grisette* before those who expect to behold a queen! If you would prove that you possess talent, elevate yourself to the personage you are representing. By placing the character on a level with yourself, you only show your own ignorance.

I think I shall offend none of those who pursue the same career as myself, by supposing that they possess as much ignorance, as many defects, and as great a portion of self-love as I did in my youth.

The applause I received, the hopes I gave of future celebrity, the compliments addressed to me from all parts, the adulations of those admirers with which I was surrounded, the exaggeration of fools, and the jealousy of my companions, made me think myself the greatest actress that had ever been seen on the stage. When I heard the names of mesdemoiselles Lecouvreur and De Seine, I expressed the same degree of

disdain which those who have succeeded me have expressed when my name has been mentioned.—It will always be so: but sooner or latter an actress must learn to know herself, and to correct her errors: the longer we conceal them, the further we are from truth: and it is only by seeking Truth, by discovering her, and by following her footsteps, an actress can acquire talents. As the sole object I have in view is that of showing the principles by which I have been guided in my theatrical pursuits, I trust I shall be excused for citing myself as an example of too much vanity.

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur no longer exists: I, therefore, will not call her

merits in question. Mademoiselle de Seine, who has retired from the stage these ten years, exactly followed the path in which I had trod; and the applauses she bestowed upon me, in the character of Electre, in which she had been pre-eminent, nearly turned my brain, so much did I feel myself gratified by them.

I moved heaven and earth to gain her acquaintance, and induce her to recite part of the verses to me. A common friend to each of us procured me the satisfaction I desired.

When she entered my room, I observed a woman evidently in the decline of life, and far from possessing

that dignified and commanding appearance which I expected. Her dress was slovenly and carelessly put on. The sound of her voice, and the manner in which she spoke, would have made me believe, if I had not seen her, that an inexperienced girl was addressing me. My triumph was complete: her refusal to recite before me I construed into an avowal of her own inability, and my superiority. At length, she consented to repeat part of the third act of Electre, and I had arranged in my mind a well-turned compliment, which, however unmerited I supposed it would be on her part, I conceived I could not in good manners dispense with. But the air of dignity she assumed when she rose, and ranged the

chairs, in order to form a sort of theatre and scenes, the change I observed in her appearance, the moment she prepared to speak, produced a total derangement of all my ideas. My vanity was silent; I felt tears already in my eyes: but when she did speak, the accents of her despair, the deep expression of grief on her countenance, the noble, and, at the same time, natural appearance of her whole deportment, penetrated my soul, enlightened it, and made me sensible how very far I was inferior to her. To punish my impertinent presumption, and to correct it in future, I have made a candid avowal of it.

Emulation is absolutely necessary to

an actress: we should never make any progress without it; but we should studiously guard against the errors of vanity.

Let us now speak of the two Electres who are at present upon the theatre.

They are both characters of the same description, their relative situations are the same, and the want of proper instruction can alone account for their being performed exactly like each other. When I first learnt that of Crebillon, I scarce had read of Agamemnon, his family, or his misfortunes. History—Sophocles—were equally unknown to me. I merely discovered a princess afflicted by the death of her father, and desirous of

the destruction of his assassins. It appeared to me easy to pourtray these sentiments; they are engraved on every honest heart. She was in love; that was easy to describe. Her choice, indeed, appeared rather beneath her character; however, nothing deterred me, nothing restrained me, and the public thought I played the character precisely as it had been drawn. But when, after a few years' labour and reflection, I endeavoured to give the part that national characteristic, and distinguishing feature, which belonged to it, I found myself wholly at a loss; I could not reconcile to the character those sentiments of love and vengeance which were painted by the author.—To love the son of her oppressor, the son of

the assassin of Agamemnon; to abandon herself to a passion which no heroism, no hope of vengeance could justify, was irreconcileable to my feelings; and Electre appeared to me a debased and degraded character, a mixture of gold and dross, which it was beyond my powers to describe. I renounced it, and for ever quitted it from the moment that the Electre of Voltaire appeared. What a fine character is this latter!—If I had been compelled never to have performed but one upon the stage, this should have been my choice; not that I do not render to others that tribute of admiration they deserve; not that I do not derive infinite gratification in performing them; but my partiality and taste for antiqui-

ty, my desire to incorporate into all my characters the manners of the times and countries, when, and in which they existed, have frequently been a source of extreme difficulty to me; and, notwithstanding all my efforts, there are many characters which I must still leave to my cotemporaries, and to France. I have nothing to dissemble, nothing further to add; the only labour required is, that the actress shall elevate her soul and her genius to the character she is to represent.

Whoever ye may be, who may undertake this character, study it, observe it, comprehend its minutest shades and distinctions. Common-rate abilities

are incapable of attempting it. Sacrifice your habits and your personal affections to it; forget that ye are handsome; avoid endeavouring to appear so. Employ at your toilets no more of art than will induce the public to believe what they behold is nature without art. Let no elegant drapery or fashionable adornment destroy that noble and affecting picture of distress and sorrow which ye are to represent.

Electre is supposed to be more than thirty years old. There are some characters, who, at the age of fifteen, are weighed down by misery and grief. I would have depictured on the countenance of her who performs Electre

the traces of long-continued sorrow; her face should be an indication of the tears that have flowed for a long series of years.

Do not forget that time drains the sources of grief:—tears flowing in abundance imply recent misfortunes. It is therefore necessary to discriminate with respect to the cause of them. Electre ought not to shed tears in the two first acts: all that is to be inferred from her expressions is, that she wishes to shed them; but the consolation they afford to a mind distressed would calm the impetuosity of her character, and, consequently, would weaken it. In order that I might seem as if a tear was

ready to start from my eye, I have had recourse to that peculiar tone of voice which is expressive of distress, and, at the same time, that kind of contraction of the stomach which produced a tremulousness of the nerves and difficulty of respiration, which indicated the agitation of my soul. These methods are as destructive to our health as they are useful to the acquirement of talent. I know, and feel the truth of what I assert; but in whatever situation I may be placed, and however I may value existence, I would sacrifice every thing to glory.

The scene where the urn is introduced requires abundance of tears; it is a new misfortune, and forms the

completion of those which preceded it; it forces every barrier. But let those tears you shed seem as if they came from the bottom of your soul; and, without employing exclamations or vehemence, let them appear as much the effect of real grief as possible. In the fourth act, where it is said,

Mon sort, a vos destins, n'est il pas asservi? &c.

appear to be gradually penetrated with that mild and consolotary affliction which a pure and undisguised passion frequently imparts.

Remember, in particular, that true grandeur has simplicity for its basis; that great characters, great misfortunes, and difficult situations, require a commanding countenance, an expressive

voice, and a dignified deportment. Act as I have done; and if you cannot attain perfection, endeavour, as far as lays in your power, to advance towards it; and prove to the public, if you should fail, that it is not for want of study, attention, and perseverance.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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